SANDGROUSE

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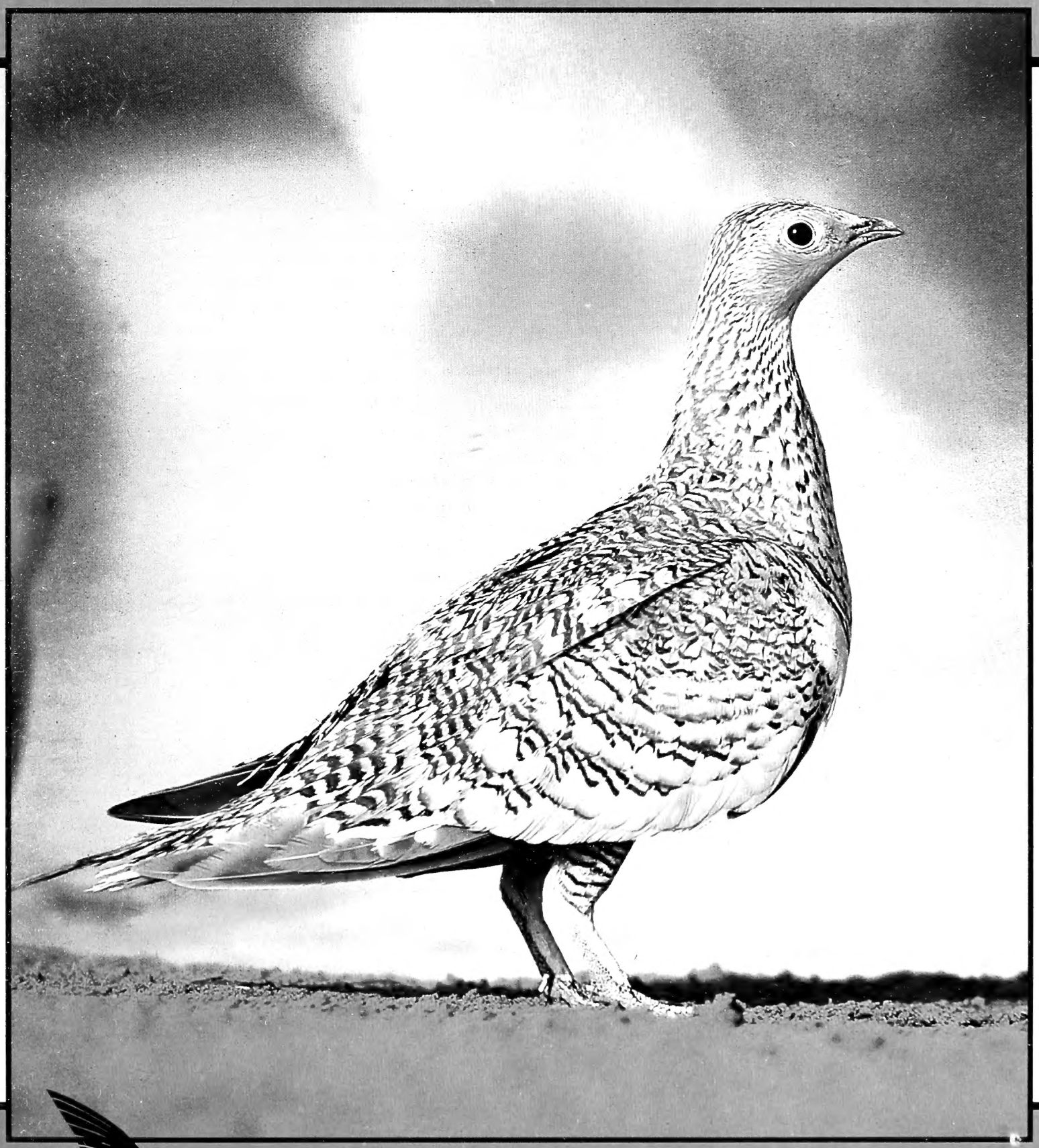

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST

OSME

SANDGROUSE

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

The Editorial Committee of *Sandgrouse* will consider for publication original papers which contribute to the body of knowledge on the birds of the Middle East: their distribution, breeding biology, behaviour, identification, conservation, etc. The Middle East for this purpose includes Turkey, Cyprus, and Libya in the west to Afghanistan and the Palearctic fringe of Pakistan in the east, the southern shores of the Black and Caspian Seas in the north, and the Arabian peninsula and the Palearctic limits in Sudan and Ethiopia in the south.

Submissions are considered on the understanding that the work has not been previously published and is not being offered for publication elsewhere.

Papers should be in English, but non-English-speaking authors who are unable to obtain translations of their work may apply to the Editor for help. Submissions should be typed on A4 paper , double-spaced, unjustified (ragged right), with two wide margins, and on one side of the paper only; two copies are required (or only one if a disk is supplied as well; see below). Authors should consult this issue of *Sandgrouse* and follow conventions for layout, headings, tables, captions, references, abbreviations, etc. Full-length papers must include a factual summary not exceeding five per cent of the length of the text. Scientific names and sequence of bird species should follow Porter, R. F. *et al.* (1996) *Handbook of the birds of the Middle East.*

Figures should be drawn without lettering in black ink on good-quality white or translucent paper. The original artwork must be supplied, plus one copy with rough lettering in place; the text of lettering should also be supplied on a separate sheet of paper (and on disk if possible; see below). In preparing figures authors should have regard to the page size and format of Sandgrouse. Figures will ideally be drawn about 50 per cent larger than final size; if they are much larger than this care should be taken to avoid use of fine detail that will be lost in reduction. Areas of fine Letraset tint should be avoided and uniform half tones (e.g. pencil shading) are not usually acceptable.

Photographs are welcomed: colour (preferably transparencies) or black and white.

It will be highly advantageous if authors prepare text on word processor. Final typesetting is done directly from disk. A disk (as well as typescript) should be supplied with the first submission. Disks should be 3 inch, DD or HD; if you are using an Apple Mac it is essential that you format the disk, and save the file, in PC format. Ideally, provide your file in WordPerfect (preferably) or Word format (even if your word processor is not one of these it may be able to produce files in one of these formats); if this is not possible, then as a simple ASCII text file, i.e. without word processor formatting codes. Please state the name and version number of your word processing program. In laying out tables on disk, data columns should be separated by hard space, not tab commands (i.e. use your space bar, not your tab key). For text, hyphenation should be turned off. In case of any doubt or difficulty, please contact the Editor.

Authors will receive galley proofs to check for typographical errors. Changes of substance cannot be made at proof stage under any circumstances. On publication, authors will be sent two copies of the appropriate issue of *Sandgrouse*. Any artwork, photographs, and disks will be returned as soon as possible after publication. Submissions should be sent to: **Sandgrouse Editor, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL, UK.**

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*, female at Yalooni, Oman taken by Hanne & Jens Eriksen

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first issue of the new look *Sandgrouse*. The newly designed journal is to be published twice yearly and will contain an approximately equal mix of ornithology previously the sole content of *Sandgrouse* - and popular information - formerly published in the *Bulletin*. Several popular features from the latter have been retained, such as *Around the Region* and *News and Information*, and there are also new sections including a regular *Photospot* and a bird watching locality feature. With increasing assistance from advertisers and other sponsors it is envisaged that *Sandgrouse* will become a distinctly more attractive and dynamic organ. Any comments on the new approach, suggestions for future improvements, offers of sponsorship and of course articles will be welcomed.

Observant readers will have noticed that *Sandgrouse* appears to have skipped an issue. Last minute problems in production have delayed the appearance of *Sandgrouse* 17, a double issue presenting the results of the OSME expedition to southern Yemen and Socotra in spring 1993. 17 (1 & 2) will be OSME's second *Sandgrouse* devoted to Yemen and is now set to appear 'hot-on-the-heels' of 18 (1).

A number of people have been instrumental in ensuring that the new *Sandgrouse* has appeared on schedule and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them. All of those involved in the production process: authors, artists, photographers (many of whom submitted illustrations and text at very short notice), advertisers and my colleagues on the editorial committee have earned my gratitude for their hard work and dedication to the project. My thanks also go to the following for their assistance in a multitude of ways: Chris Bradshaw, Dick Filby, Andrew Grieve, Rod Martins, Matthew May, Richard Porter and Geoff and Hilary Welch. Finally I must make mention of Duncan Brooks, outgoing editor of *Sandgrouse*, whose painstaking attention to standards and detail has insured the overall quality of the journal in recent years. He will be an extremely difficult act to follow.

Guy M. Kirwan, Editor

OSME News

OSME SUMMER MEETING AND EIGHTEENTH AGM

A reminder that this event will be again held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, Russell Square, London on Saturday 20th July (for full details see the flyer enclosed with this issue of *Sandgrouse*).

Birdwatching behaviour abroad

Recent papers in the ornithological press, including that on the first records of Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* in Turkey and Israel in *Sandgrouse* 16 (1): 36-40, have again raised questions concerning the ethics of collecting bird specimens as well as stimulating discussion amongst the Chairmen and committees of the four regional bird clubs (OSME, ABC, NBC and OBC).

Whilst all of us have a personal view on whether collecting is justifiable, where it is deemed necessary it is vital that all relevant permissions are obtained from the authorities of the country in question. However, in future the editor of *Sandgrouse* will retain the right to reject papers where they consider that national or international bird protection laws have been ignored or there are moral reasons preventing publication.

Whilst the collection of specimens is best viewed as ornithological research, other less emotive activities which are damaging to species or habitats cannot be condoned. It is considered opportune to remind OSME members that regardless of where they are in the world, there are a few basic principles which should be borne in mind when out birding.

- the welfare of the bird must come first. It is easy in the heat of the moment to put personal satisfaction, be it getting a closer view or a better photograph, above other considerations. Occasionally such actions can place the bird or birds in question under undue stress or cause unnecessary disturbance.

- all of the countries in the OSME region have wildlife protection laws relating to species or areas. These should always be respected. Legislation has often only come about after prolonged lobbying by individuals or groups and the thoughtless actions of a few can easily jeopardise years of hard work.

- whether you are birdwatching for pleasure or undertaking scientific research, you are likely to be viewed by local people as a typical birdwatcher; therefore your actions reflect on the birdwatching community as a whole. Again thoughtless behaviour could ruin future birdwatching for others.

- visiting birdwatchers often do not make their records available to the local bird club or records committee. With only small numbers of resident or national birdwatchers in many countries in the region, observations by overseas birdwatchers are often a major source of information on the status of particular species or habitats. Therefore if you have kept detailed records of a trip, consider making them available to the relevant organisation - if you are unsure who to send them to, send a copy to OSME and they can be forwarded.

The above should be second nature to most birdwatchers, especially those from Western Europe where there are comprehensive bird protection laws. However, even some of the most respected birdwatchers have been known to forget the most fundamental codes of conduct when abroad - seeing the bird apparently taking precedence over everything else!

In future, take a few seconds to stop and consider whether you are really putting the interests of the bird first.

Geoff Welch, Chairman of Council,

OBITUARY

John Norman Bishop (Bish) Brown

Bish Brown, a 42 year expatriate resident in the Middle East, died in August 1995 after a short retirement in the UK and an even shorter terminal illness. Following end of war service in the Fleet Air Arm, he went first to south-west Iran and then Kuwait as an oil industry worker. It was there in the 1960s that I first met him as founder of the Ahmadi Natural History Group. Although his prime interests were Reptilia and Lepidoptera, like all good desert naturalists he had learned to ignore nothing that moved and many other things that didn't. And when to mollify me birds were on the agenda, he bowed to Prof Angus Bellairs' dictum: only reptiles with feathers! We loved Kuwait and combed every inch of its desert habitually. Thank God that by the time Saddam made such a mess of it, Bish had found a new home in Abu Dhabi and became as familiar with every inch of the much more extensive Emirates. He was a talented nature photographer and kept meticulous diaries throughout, but was perfectly happy to let others access and publish his data. His desert companion in later years, Rob Western, has paid his tributes in ENHG's journal *Tribulus*; I chokingly got to deliver a valedictory at the funeral in Ascot attended by many he had known in the Gulf. And as befits the man, his wife Beth directed tokens of remembrance to The Emirates Leopard Trust helping to conserve the big cats of south-east Arabia.

Stan Howe

NEWS & INFORMATION

compiled by Simon Albrecht

The aim of this section is to inform readers about events in the OSME region It relies on members and others supplying relevant news and information. If you have any item concerning birds, conservation or development issues in the OSME region please send it to News and Information, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, U.K.

This section is not intended as a definitive report or write up of the projects concerned. Many of the projects are sponsored; such support is appreciated but is not generally given acknowledgement here.

CYPRUS

An Expedition by the Royal Air Force Ornithological Society to the Akamas Peninsula in the extreme northwest of Cyprus from 23 March to 3 May 1995 recorded 127 species. The aims were to determine the scale and timing of the spring migration and to record breeding species. 36 species were found breeding and 3,516 birds of 65 species were ringed in the census area. (Source: *Brit. Birds* 88 (11): 567)

ISRAEL

At the request of SPNI and the International Birdwatching Centre, Eilat, BirdLife International wrote to government officials in Israel seeking protection for a threatened area of desert north of the Gulf of Aqaba, which forms part of the Eilat IBA. The area, which holds large numbers of lark species, is under threat from ploughing. (Source: *Network News* 3 (3).)

Vulture volunteers The Nature Reserves Authority of Israel is running a nesting surveillance project on Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* in Gamla Nature Reserve, from February to September 1996. The study aims to uncover reasons for the decline of this, the country's largest vulture population. Volunteers are required for monitoring and recording data during the nesting season, and will participate in radio-telemetry. Accommodation and basic subsistence will be provided. Details from Lia Court (Gamla Reserve Manager), PO Box 70, Katzrin, Golan, Israel; fax +972-6-921733; tel. +972-50-509930 (day), +972-6-763511 (evenings).

JORDAN

As part of the continuing programme to identify the status of birds and their habitats in Jordan, RSNC initiated two further surveys in autumn 1995. The surveys, of birds and plants, covered two IBAs: Mujib and Burqu'.

Mujib wildlife reserve, on the edge of the Dead Sea, covers an area of 212 km^2. It is important for its raptors and stork migrations as well as a range of desert-loving breeding birds, including Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus*. Further surveys of Mujib are taking place in 1996 aided by the UK RSPB. A comprehensive breeding bird census is planned together with counts of migratory birds, especially raptors.

Burqu', a proposed protected area which hopefully will become Jordan's first Biosphere Reserve, is an area of 1,000 km^2 bordering Syria and Iraq. The area's history can be traced to the Nabatean/Roman era when a dam was created for water collection. This has resulted in an important wetland for migratory and breeding birds, amongst which are seven species of lark, Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* and the black morph of the Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*, which is only found in this area of Jordan.

A rehabilitation project is underway in the Azraq wetland, funded by the Global Environment Facility. 1995 saw the first signs of success with large areas of the Qa flooded, providing suitable habitat for migratory waterfowl as well as breeding waders including Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta*. The wildlife of this unique area has also benefitted from the programme to restrict water abstraction, which has resulted in the reappearance of permanent pools and marshes. (Source: *Network News* 3 (3) and 4 (1).)

KUWAIT

Jahra Pool Reserve In *Bull.* 33 we reported on a threat to the Jahra Pool Reserve which is an IBA. It appears that the pool is becoming more important due to the displacement of birds from the Iraq marshes which are being drained. Numbers of wetland birds have increased including those of the Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocepahlus griseldis* whose numbers have grown from singles to hundreds.

LEBANON

The ban on the shooting of birds introduced in January 1995 was rescinded in September following lobbying by hunters and ammunition dealers. A four month hunting season (specifying the species which could be shot) was sanctioned. It is proposed that hunting will then be banned until the end of 1997. (Source: *Eco News* 18.9.95 - a Lebanese English weekly)

With the arrival of peace in Lebanon there has been a great increase in new buildings with small villages rapidly becoming towns. This, together with the unsolved problem of sewage disposal, is having a negative affect on the environment.

PALESTINE

Palestinian Environmental Protection Agency OSME offers congratulations to this recently created agency, founded by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and the PLO Executive Committee. Its purpose is to propose environmental policy, promote environmental consciousness and conduct research into environmental problems in Gaza and the West Bank. Its headquarters will be in Jerusalem. (Source: *Network News* 4 (1).)

WEST BANK

Children for the Protection of Nature, a Palestinian NGO in the West Bank working for wildlife conservation and environmental awareness, has produced a book on the birds of the West Bank particularly aimed at school children. (Source: *Network News* 3 (3).)

SAUDI ARABIA

The Ibex *Capra nubiana* was almost unknown in the mid-1980s and was thought virtually extinct. Work by the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD) has created protected areas and increased numbers significantly. One of the main threats to the Ibex is overgrazing by livestock and protection of the species depends on restricting grazing by domestic livestock. Unfortunately not all pastoralists see this as an appropriate strategy. (Source: *Oryx* 30 (1))

TURKEY

Rescued bears freed On 19 August 1995 the first six Brown Bears *Ursus arctos* rescued from being forced to 'dance' and pose with tourists

on the streets of Istanbul were released into a forest sanctuary at Karacebey near Bursa. The release is part of a long-term project by the World Society for the Protection of Animals and the Turkish Government to end the spectacle of captive bears on the streets and beaches of Turkey. Since 1993 about 20 bears have been confiscated and taken to the Wildlife Rescue Centre at Uludag University in Bursa for rehabilitation. Only 2000 - 3000 bears are left in the wild in Turkey. (Source: WSPA in *Oryx* 30 (1))

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Al Wasl Lagoon - There are plans to designate the Al Wasl Lagoon (also known as the Ramtha Lagoon) as the first bird reserve of its kind in the Emirates. The lagoon is an extensive area of Sabkha salt flats which are flooded after heavy rainfall, and are usually partly flooded as a result of former waste disposal. The resulting complex of ponds, reedbeds and shallow pools attracts a diversity of bird life not found anywhere else in the country. Al Wasl Lagoon is one of 20 IBAs identified in the Emirates. (Source: *Network News* 3 (3).)

Marine reserves Three marine nature reserves have been declared by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Mohamed al Sharqi, Ruler of Fujairah. They are the coral reefs off Al Faquit, Dhadnah and Al Aqqa on the Emirates east coast.

Desert museum In November 1995, the ruler of Sharjah, His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohamed al-Qasimi, opened the Sharjah Desert Museum, the main aim of which will be to encourage an understanding of desert ecology and conservation.

A *Federal Environmental Agency* has been created in Abu Dhabi.
(Source: *Network News* 4 (1)

The *National Avian Research Center* sponsored a three day workshop by the Middle East Falcon Research Group (MEFRG) last November. The main focus of the workshop was the Saker *Falco cherrug*. Sessions included presentations on falcon veterinary medicine, Saker taxonomy, including DNA studies, and conservation priorities. Further details from Public Relations Department, NARC, PO Box 45553, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Arabian Leopard workshop While the Leopard is common in sub-Saharan Africa it is heavily persecuted and among the most threatened cats in North Africa and the Middle East. A workshop is to be held in Dubai to consider the problem of the distribution and conservation of the Arabian Leopard *Panthera tigris nimr*. (Source: *Species* IUCN Newsletter No. 24)

YEMEN

Yemen Ornithological Society A rejuvenated YOS has been active in 1995. World Birdwatch Day was observed with a group counting wildfowl at Hodeidah Lagoons, and another taking a group of Yemeni schoolchildren on a visit to the Jebel Baus. Altogether some 40 people were involved.

A start is being made to computerise the Yemen bird records, and regular meetings and field trips are now in place. Increasing cooperation with, and input to, the Environment Protection Council (EPC), the responsible government department, bodes well for future planned projects.

In the conservation field, a presentation was made by the YOS, in the person of Omar Sagheir, to the Sana'a City Development Committee, outlining recommendations for ensuring that the rich avifauna of the Sana'a district are conserved and protected as the city expands.

White stork with transmitter A White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* was shot in early November by the army near Mudiyah, in Abyan Governate, east of Aden. A ring with German reference coding and a radio transmitter were removed and handed to the American Embassy in Sana'a. Enquiries have shown that the bird had been ringed about 100 km from Berlin as part of a tracking programme to study Stork movements to and from their winter quarters. The bird had disappeared from the tracking screen in early November. (Source: Yemen Ornithological Society)

A *Book on Yemen birds* prepared by OSME, Birdlife and the EPC in Yemen is in the process of publication. It will be distributed to all schools in Yemen.

A *National Action Plan for Environment and Development* is in preparation involving the EPC and the World Bank amongst others. It is

hoped that the plan will take full account of the ecological importance of the Highland Terraces and the island of Socotra, which between them hold at least 19 species of endemic birds.

A DIRECTORY OF WETLANDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The directory, which was compiled by Dr Derek Scott and launched in Saudi Arabia in October 1995, covers 223 sites of international importance selected on the basis of criteria developed in relation to the Ramsar Convention. It provides a list of the highest priorities for wetland conservation action. Further information available from BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK. Tel: + 44 1223 277318.

COLOUR RINGED GULLS

The following colour ringed gulls may occur in the OSME region during the 1995/96 winter season:

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus (argentatus) omissus*: ringed with a single engraved black PVC ring in Latvia.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus (argentatus) cachinnans*: ringed with a single engraved red PVC ring in Poland, Rumania and Ukraine.

Siberian Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus (fuscus) heuglini*: ringed with a single engraved white or red PVC ring in Russia and Siberia.

Taimyr Gull *Larus (fuscus) taimyrensis*: ringed with a single engraved white or red PVC ring in Russia and Siberia.

Please send details of any sightings to: Norman van Swelm, Voorne Bird Observatory, PO Box 305, 3233 ZG Oostvoorne, The Netherlands. Details are also available of colour ringed gulls and Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* ringed in western Europe.

HOUBARA BUSTARD

A Memorandum of Cooperation on the Conservation of the Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* between the National Avian Research Centre (NARC) of Abu Dhabi, UAE and the National Academy of Sciences in Kazakhstan was signed in Almarty on 13 February 1995. The Memorandum marks a significant step forward for establishing a common international approach to the conservation of the Houbara Bustard.

Under the Memorandum, several projects will be implemented over the next three years, including:

- survey and monitoring of the Houbara Bustard population;
- migration studies on Houbara Bustards using satellite telemetry;
- study on ecology and behaviour of Houbara Bustards;
- captive propagation of Houbara Bustards;
- setting up of a Houbara Bustard protection unit;
- providing information/guides on bustards and falcons for local researchers and wildlife inspectors.

The first season of work in the Taukum Sands has started successfully. Nine bustards were trapped in May and June 1995, and fitted with time-delay satellite transmitters to track the autumn migration. Results so far have indicated extreme site-faithfulness over the summer, but in mid-August one bird moved 850 km south to the Kyzyl Kum desert. In addition 16 eggs were collected and the chicks transported to Abu Dhabi to start a joint captive rearing programme. All the birds are doing well.

The newly-formed IUCN/SSC Houbara Bustard Working Group, which is supported by NARC, planned to bring representatives together from all Asian range states for the species at a technical cooperation meeting in Oman in January 1996. Additional bilateral work has begun in Pakistan, and initiatives are planned in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. (Source: *Network News* 3 (3).)

BARCELONA CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

In June 1995 the contracting parties to the Barcelona Convention decided to enlarge its field of competence from the marine to the coastal habitats around the Mediterranean.

At a meeting in Montpellier in November 1995 the following 11 threatened bird species were added to the list of protected species: Cory's

Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, Mediterranean Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*, European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, Pygmy Cormorant *P. pygmaeus*, White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* and Little Tern *S. albifrons*.

In addition it was decided to extend a protective conservation status at a later date to the following four species:
Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*, Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae*, Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* and Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*.

It will be the responsibility of NGOs and all concerned ornithologists to apply these new criteria in the field by protecting the vital habitats of all threatened species in the 22 countries bordering the Mediterranean. Further information from: MEDMARAVIS, BP.2, 83470 Saint Maximin, France.

Pygmy Cormorant by M Langman

Requests for INFORMATION

Caspian Snowcock desk study.
The World Pheasant Association/BirdLife International/Species Survival Commission's Specialist Group on Partridges, Quails and Francolins (PQF) has recently published its Conservation Action Plan for 1995-1999 (see review on page 71). Caspian Snowcock *Tetraogallus caspius* is now categorised as vulnerable (according to Mace-Lande criteria) and the PQF Specialist Group is considering ways in which the distribution and status of the species can be clarified. Initially it is planned to launch a desk study of the species' range, pooling information from all of the range states (two of which lie within the OSME region): Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran and Turkmenistan. OSME is working closely with the PQF specialist group in order to realise this aim; making all its data, published and unpublished, available to the group. Anyone interested in either providing information on the species, or able to coordinate such a study by writing to appropriate researchers in the range states as well as thoroughly researching the literature for records of the species should write to Guy Kirwan, 6 Connaught Road, Norwich NR2 3BP, U.K. or fax +44 1603 767757, who is currently steering the work on behalf of the PQF Specialist Group.

Raptor Migration Atlas Project (RMAP).
The atlas project aims to provide the scientific underpinning necessary to design an effective global strategy to conserve raptor habitat along major migration routes. The work is designed to establish an international registry of sites which are of global significance to migrating raptors. Several countries within the Middle East are currently not covered by the project and the organisers would like to hear from potential correspondents in the following: Bahrain, Cyprus, Jordan and Qatar. Contact Keith L. Bildstein, Hawks Aloft Worldwide, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, RR 2 Box 191, Kempton, PA 19529 - 9449, USA; fax ++ 1 610 756 4468 or email Bildstein@say.acnatsci.org.

Observations on Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* in Jerusalem

DR ADY GANCZ

Between February and August 1986, I studied breeding Long-billed Pipits *Anthus similis* near Jerusalem, Israel where the resident subspecies is *captus*: a relatively small, pale and poorly marked race, compared to those found in Africa and elsewhere in south-west Asia. Vaurie (1959) mentions eighteen distinct subspecies, with *captus* also found in adjacent parts of Syria, Jordan and the Lebanon. It is a fairly common breeding bird in the Mediterranean montane zone of northern and central Israel; inhabiting rocky and terraced upland slopes, chiefly at 250-750 metres, with low sparse vegetation (batha and garrigue) (Shirihai 1995).

The study area was a large hill, rising to 800 metres, consisting of stony hillsides with rocky outcrops, near the Manahat district of Jerusalem. The area is covered by low trees and shrubs less than one metre high, as well as some grassy areas: typical habitat for the species. Long-billed Pipit territories were situated on the slopes of the hill, but the summit, which was densely covered with shrubs, was unoccupied. In the study area I trapped and colour ringed a number of individuals. Studies in the 1980s in western Shorom and Jerusalem demonstrated that the mean minimum distance between nests was 300 metres and mean territory size (in areas with occupational density) about four hectares (range 1.9-4.7) (Shirihai 1995). In the study area I located seven pairs and five nests. These were concealed on the ground, under a rock or grassy tuft, and difficult to find. Other species breeding in the same area included: Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*, Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*, Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*, Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta*, Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* and Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*.

Outside the breeding season, Long-billed Pipit is a rather shy and solitary bird, spending most time searching for food on the ground. On several occasions pairs were observed, which usually remained in close contact. Groups of three or four were infrequently encountered. Individuals maintain a strict personal space, or distance, of roughly a metre. Interactions which bring about closer contact usually result in aggressive attacks, even between members of a pair. They communicate by a series of low-pitched calls, given from the ground. The call is a monosyllabic, flat 'tyup' or 'dyup', very different from the calls of other large pipits, including those of Tawny and Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*. This call is used in flight and more frequently on the ground, when anxious or alarmed.

During February, behaviour changes markedly, with the establishment of breeding territories. The males spend most of the day singing from dominant song posts, usually rocky outcrops, large boulders or small trees. Every 10-15 minutes they perform a short display flight: ascending whilst singing loudly, then flapping their wings in the manner of a Crested Lark, before descending abruptly, tail cocked, to another song post. The song is distinctive, most having a trisyllabic whistle. The first two notes 'hoo-it' or 'tir-ee' are reminiscent of a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, but louder, longer and more disyllabic. The third note is the exact opposite of the first two, a 'tiu' descending in pitch and of shorter duration. Many males have slightly different versions of the basic song, some adding another note between the second and third. On several occasions females (identified by their colour rings) were noted singing.

By late February territories have become established, although the exact boundaries appear to change almost daily through confrontation. When one male enters another domain, a pattern of confrontation ensues. At first they maintain a distance of two to three metres, watching each other very closely. They then make threat gestures, by raising the tail c. 60° and drooping their wings, or by

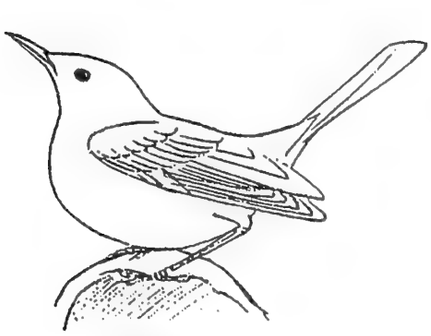
stretching out their necks and body in line with the tail (Position A). Following this, the protagonists move closer and start to circle each other, nervously flapping their wings and half opening their tail: sometimes they also bow in a manner reminiscent of wheatears *Oenanthe* sp. Finally physical conflict may result with the two combatants flying up, beating each other with their wings and feet until the loser desists and retreats. The dominant male will pursue the loser from its territory. This type of territorial dispute occurs several time per hour for some days until the territory borders are more clearly defined.

At approximately the same time as territories are established, mating occurs. The female signifies her willingness to copulate by adopting an invitational posture (Position B), raising her tail above the horizontal, pointing her bill vertically upwards and drooping the wings, whilst flicking or flapping them. At this point, copulation takes place. On several occasions, the act of copulation appeared to be intended as a territorial deterrent to neighbouring males. On one occasion copulation occurred immediately following a territorial dispute, on a very conspicuous boulder in clear view of neighbouring males.

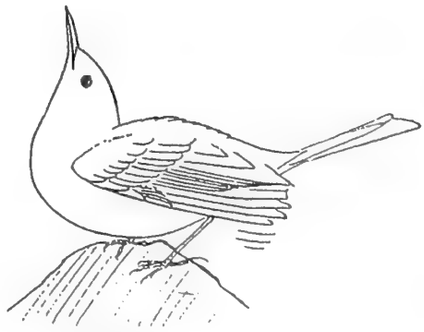
The nests of five pairs were located within the study area. The minimum distance between nests is usually 300 metres (Shirihai 1995). Nine nests were constructed by the five pairs, one pair building four before successfully rearing a brood. Each time they were unsuccessful, a new nest was built. The pairs which successfully raised young early in the season made no attempt to raise a second brood. As the breeding territory becomes well established, nest building starts. In the study area, it began in the first week of March. It is largely undertaken by the female: the males often visit the nest but offer little assistance in its construction. The nest is made of grasses and is concealed under a boulder or bush. In the study area the species preferred to build under small bushes, especially *Hyperrhenia hirta*. The external diameter of the nest varied from 110-140 mm. the internal from 70-80 mm and the depth between 35-50 mm. Nest construction takes just over a week.

Almost as soon as the nest is completed, the female begins egg laying. The clutch varies from two to five eggs with three appearing to be the most frequent clutch size. The eggs measure approximately 17 x 23 mm, weigh 2.7 grammes and are grey, densely mottled with dark brown spots. Incubation starts upon completion of the clutch and lasts 14 days with the female undertaking all the work. The males were neither observed incubating or feeding the female on the nest; if they perform either duty it must be infrequently. During the incubation period, males defend the territory from intruders or other potential sources of danger. Upon detecting a threat, the male alerts the sitting female and then, if necessary, they will both mob the intruder. Should the female be forced to leave the nest, she will sometimes feign injury by spreading the wings, attempting to direct the intruder away from the nest (Position C). During this performance unusually loud calls, not otherwise noted, are used. Sources of danger include: Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes crucigera*, Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* and Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, as well as dogs and snakes.

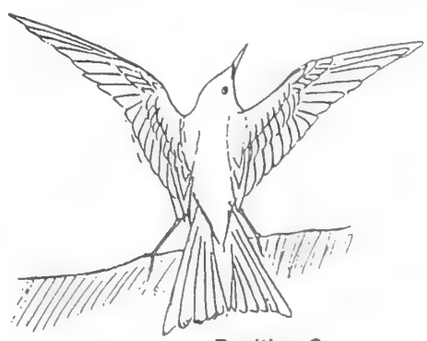
Hatching occurs 14 days after the start of the incubation period and takes up to six hours. The eggs hatch almost concurrently. At this time the nestlings weigh c. 2.4 grammes and are fed by the female almost immediately. She will brood the chicks for seven to nine days, as well as taking most of the responsibility for feeding the young. Males will only occasionally supply food; usually caterpillars and small grasshoppers, both of which are abundant in the area. When feeding the young, the adult approaches the nest very



Position A



Position B



Position C

cautiously, by an indirect route, and if disturbed swallows the food and departs.

14-15 days after hatching the young leave the nest. They are not yet fully fledged, having only rounded, rudimentary wings and a short stubby tail. They spend most of their time hiding under bushes or rocks waiting for the adults to bring food. After a further week the fledglings start to follow the adults and beg more persistently. At 30-35 days, the young are virtually independant. They now spend all their time feeding in the vicinity of their parents territory.

The Common Cuckoo was first recorded in Israel by Tristram in 1860, but breeding was not recorded until 1974. Between then and 1983, 14 juveniles are known to have been reared. In all cases the hosts were Scrub Warblers. Since 1983 there have been 12 additional records, ten of which were in the nests of Long-billed Pipit, one in a Scrub Warbler nest and one in a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* nest. Eighteen of the total of 26 breeding records are from the Jerusalem area, where both Long-billed Pipit and Scrub Warbler occur. Until 1982 the latter was the sole host in this region. Suitable habitat for this species has declined markedly since then, and the Common Cuckoo has started to parasitise Long-billed Pipit nests as a result. Since 1983 the Common Cuckoo has laid only the latter species' nests, and it is thought that this habit will increase, as it earlier done with the Scrub Warbler (Shirihai 1995).

Male cuckoos arrive in the Jerusalem area from late February and females from mid-March. In 1986 the first female was recorded on 17 March. At this time a pair of Long-billed Pipits was already incubating and three others were on the point of laying. The first cuckoo egg was not laid until 10 April, by which time all four were too far advanced for it to succeed. Mysteriously all four nests were then predated. There is no proof that the female cuckoo was responsible but it is not unlikely given the behaviour described by Wyllie (1975, 1981). Over the following 35 days, three of the four built a second nest; each was parasitised by the female Common Cuckoo. One pair lost its second nest with a young cuckoo in it and immediately built a third that was again parasitised. The female cuckoo found all the nests at the laying stage.

In Europe frequent hosts are suspicious of strange eggs in their clutch, thus Common Cuckoo eggs evolve to more closely mimic those of the host species (Baker 1942, Lack 1968, Wyllie 1981). In the present study the eggs seemed only slightly larger than the pipits, but were noticeably paler and more contrasting in colouration. It would appear that the Common Cuckoo's success in parasitising Long-billed Pipit nests may be related to the comparative inexperience of this new host and therefore its relative insensitiveness to the strange egg.

Plate 1. Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis arabicus*, Rakhyut (Oman). (*Hanne & Jens Eriksen*)

Plate 2. Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis captus*, near Zarga Ma'in (Jordan). (*Ian J. Andrews*)

All four cuckoo eggs hatched. In three cases the cuckoo hatched sufficiently ahead of the pipits to remove them. In the fourth nest it hatched later than its hosts young and was unable to compete with the pipits which were at least a week older and weighed four times as much. After four days it starved.

Only one young cuckoo fledged successfully but the other two were predated. One pair of pipits had an eventful season. Their first nest was predated; their second and third were both parasitised by the female cuckoo and later predated, before they built a fourth, in which eggs were laid on 1 July. By this time there were no adult cuckoos in the area and the pair successfully raised three young.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the following for their help and information: Yaron Bazar, Ehud Dovrat, Rami Mizrachi, Mrs Leslie Oliver, Gideon and Yoav Perleman and Doron Phridman.

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Dr Ady Gancz, P.O. Box 9110, Jerusalem, Israel.

Plate 4. Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis jerdoni*, New Delhi (India), January 1993. (*Tim Loseby*)

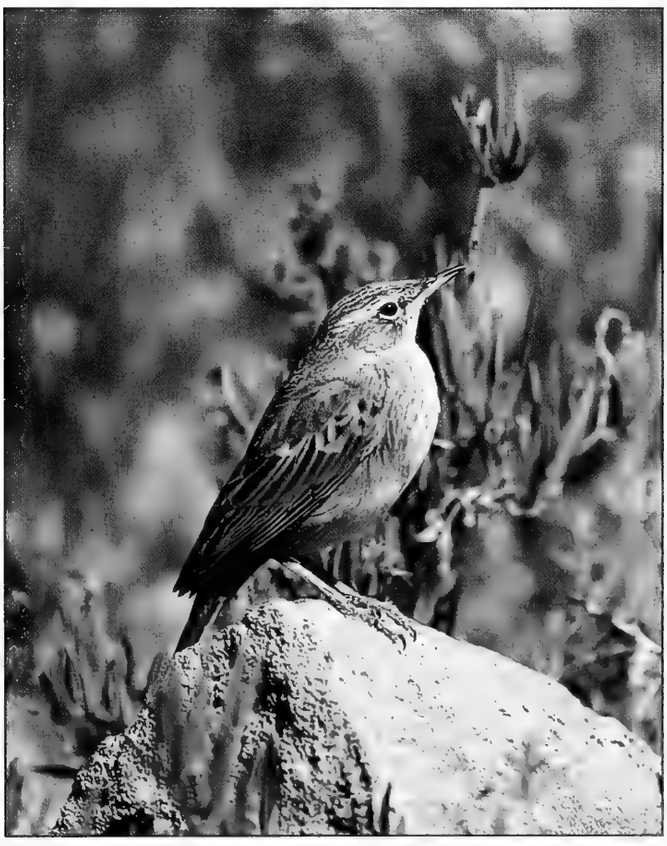

Plate 3. Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*, Naqil Sumanah (Yemen), November 1989. (*Magnus Ullman*)

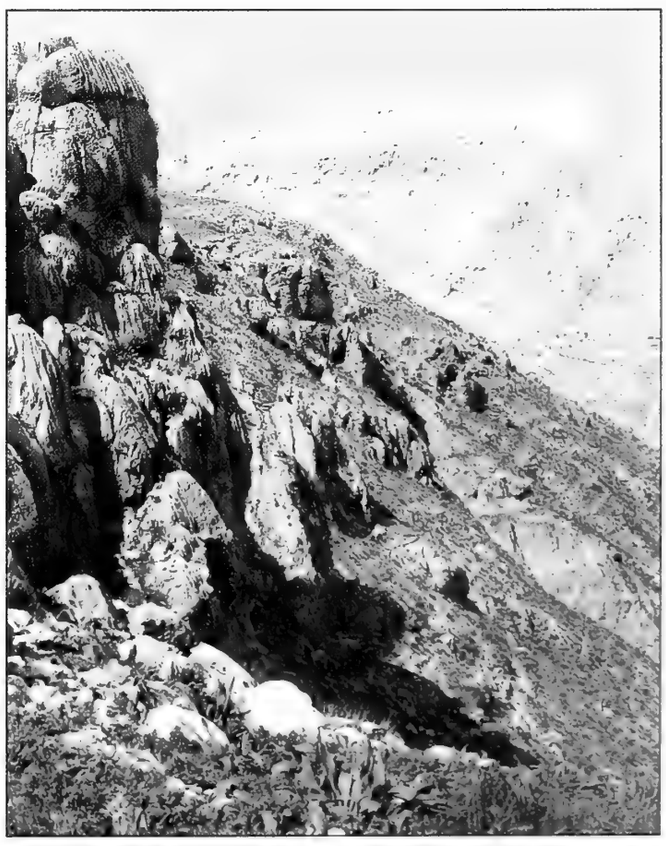

Plate 5. Long-billed Pipit habitat, west of Kufranja, north-west Jordan. (*Ian J. Andrews*)

The Zaranik Experience

WAHEED SALAMA AND ANDREW GRIEVE

Where else is it possible to have almost exclusive use of several miles of a beautiful sandy beach, excellent weather and thousands of birds flying past all day on visible migration? This is autumn at the eastern Mediterranean migration hotspot of Zaranik, Egypt.

SPECTACULAR SEA-WATCHING

Autumn sea-watching in the eastern Mediterranean may not be considered exciting compared to north-west European headlands, but small numbers of Cory's *Calonectris diomedea* and Mediterranean Shearwaters *Puffinus (puffinus) yelkouan* are regular whilst three species of skua are often present, indicating overland migration from the breeding grounds in northern Russia: up to 25 Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus*, double figures of Pomarine *S. pomarinus* and a few Long-tailed Skuas *S. longicaudus* can be expected but it is the huge passages of herons, ducks, waders and terns which make this a unique sea-watching site.

Westerly migration at Zaranik seems to be independent of the weather and is apparent on a daily basis. Birds either pass out to sea, close inshore along the beach, high overhead or inland behind the viewing point; the proverbial eyes in the back of the head are very useful. In early September day totals of over 22,000 Garganey, *Anas querquedula* more than 2000 each of Night *Nycticorax nycticorax* and Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea*, in excess of 700 Squacco Herons *Ardeola ralloides* and out at sea, movements of Little Bitterns *Ixobrychus minutus*, which can exceptionally exceed 1000 in a day, have been recorded. It can prove challenging keeping up with up to 600 White-winged Black *Chlidonias leucopterus* and 300 or more Whiskered Terns *C. hybridus* in addition to the 44 species of waders that have been observed flying past. To newcomers the first Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* battling against a headwind under a hot sun comes as a surprise but up to 150 in a day is not unusual. In October, peaks of over 1000 White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus* and 32 Great White Egrets *Egretta alba* in a day have been noted but the overall volume of passage is much reduced, although, as yet, little is known about these late autumn movements.

Some scarcer species have been observed, such as Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* and Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*; both of the two Egyptian records of the latter species have been at Zaranik. Recent observations indicate that Audouin's Gull *L. audouinii* is regular with up to five present in autumn 1995.

The real value of sea-watching lies in the annual species totals which may show long term trends. In the early 1980s over 220,000 Garganey passed Zaranik but in recent years many fewer have been counted. Whilst heron numbers have increased, waders have decreased, Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* numbers in particular are lower, former totals of 2700 in a season are no longer matched.

ZARANIK LAGOON

Many of the birds counted whilst sea-watching also pause to rest and feed on and around the Zaranik coastal lagoon and the salt company lagoons further inland which can be counted from the track beyond the pumping station. Substantial numbers of herons, gulls and terns are usually present and among the commoner waders a few scarcer species can be detected such as White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura*, Terek *Xenus cinereus* and Broad-billed Sandpipers *Limicola falcinellus* and Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*. Zaranik is perhaps the most regular Egyptian site for Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* and Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*. Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*, another accidental, is most often recorded near the Observatory.

In winter up to 10,000 Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber* are present along with small numbers of Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis*. Important gatherings of wintering gulls include up to 1000 Slender-billed *Larus genei* and 300 Armenian Gulls *L. armenicus* and the occasional Egyptian rarity,

such as Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* may also be present. To check the site in the winter, take the track by the artificial lagoons south of the pumping station and fishing village.

PASSERINE MIGRATION

Radar studies indicate that at the height of the autumn migration, up to 20 percent of the millions of birds arriving from southern Europe/Russia make landfall along the coast each day. At Zaranik, the bushes in the dunes near the Observatory hold most birds in spring but in autumn, most migrants are concentrated in areas nearer the shore. The bushes closer to the beach and around the pumping station should be checked for migrants, as well as the fishing village and low vegetation behind the sea-watch point. Further west, along the track around the artificial lagoons, El Fusiyat island is another very productive area for migrants.

The autumn migration starts in late July when Lesser Whitethroats *Sylvia curruca* and Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* are the most numerous passerine night migrants in the region. August is the best time to catch up with east Mediterranean specialities such as Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*, Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum* and Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*. Up to 50 Thrush Nightingales *Luscinia luscinia* can be present in early September along with a sprinkling of warblers such as Rüppell's *Sylvia rueppelli*, a few Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* and once, a Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* on 3rd September 1993, the third Egyptian record. Early to mid-September is a good time to compare the various plumages of Ortolan *Emberiza hortulana* and Cretzschmars Bunting *Emberiza caesia*; Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* peak from mid to late September when up 40 can be counted, whilst scarcer migrants include Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* and once an Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*. In addition to grounded migrants, substantial visible movements of Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* and Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* are a feature. Up to 50 Black-eared *Oenanthe hispanica* along with smaller numbers of Isabelline Wheatears *O. isabellina* may also be present. In early October the first

Plate 1. Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, a very common migrant at Zaranik. (*W. Salama*)

winter visitors such as Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* and Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* arrive and further scarce migrants like Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* can be expected, whilst both Pied *Oenanthe pleschanka* and Cyprus Pied Wheatear *O. cypriaca* have occurred in mid-October. Few observations have been made any later than this but it is known that large numbers of Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis* arrive and there has been a single record of Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*. In recent autumns intensive monitoring of Corncrake *Crex crex* numbers, a globally threatened species which occurs here on migration in greater numbers than anywhere else, has resulted in 50 birds being trapped in 1995, amply demonstrating the possibilities for future single species studies.

The massive waterbird migrations of the autumn are not repeated in the spring but substantial passerine migration occurs from late February when Lesser Whitethroats start to arrive from sub-Saharan Africa. From early March this migration increases with large visible movements of Short-toed Larks (up to several thousand daily) and then later in the month impressive numbers of summer plumaged Ortolan and Cretzschmars Buntings, with a wide range of warblers, Masked Shike *Lanius nubicus* and Wryneck. Late April and early May is also interesting with significant arrivals of Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* and smaller numbers of Barred and Orphean Warblers *S. hortensis*.

RAPTORS AND BREEDERS

March and April is perhaps the best time to see occasional thermalling raptors such as Lesser Spotted *Aquila pomarina*, Steppe *A. nipalensis* and Short-toed Eagles *Circaetus gallicus*, as well as White Storks *Ciconia ciconia*, which may arrive if strong southerly winds drift birds away from the Sinai mountains. In September up to 20 Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* have been noted arriving off the sea. Both Montagu's *Circus pygargus* and Pallid Harriers *C. macrourus* also occur at this time but require a keen eye for separation. The main falcon passage commences with perhaps an Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* or a party of Red-footed Falcons *F. vespertinus* on roadside wires in late September. These are followed by Hobby *F. subbuteo* in good numbers during October with the occasional Lanner *F. biarmicus* and then a few Long-legged Buzzards *Buteo rufinus* and Black Kites *Milvus migrans* later.

There have been few observations in summer but breeding birds include Avocet (the only breeding site in Egypt), Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* (1900 pairs in the area, internationally important), Spur-winged Plover *Hoplopterus spinosus*, Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* (1200 pairs, internationally important), Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*, Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* and Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*. Summering species include Greater Flamingo, Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Slender-billed Gull and Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*.

THE OBSERVATORY

Zaranik is an important bottleneck for migrating birds and is to feature in the forthcoming Important Bird Areas of Egypt. It was established as a Protected Area by the Egyptian Government in 1983 and forms part of the Lake Bardawil RAMSAR site declared in 1988. It is also the site of Egypt's first bird observatory and a great opportunity exists for others to experience this magnificent migration spectacle. The Observatory can accommodate up to six people in three bedrooms and has electricity and water. Zaranik is located 35 kilometres west of El Arish on the main north Sinai road and can be reached by either bus or taxi services both of which regularly operate between Cairo and El Arish, although arrangements need to be made to stop at Zaranik. Intending day visitors are advised to contact the Manager, Waheed Salama in advance as visits to the area need to be properly cleared with the local authorities. Entry to the Protected Area is free but an accommodation charge of £3 Sterling per night is levied for staying at the Observatory and this must be pre-booked with Waheed Salama at the address below. The Zaranik Annual Report for 1995 is available from Andrew Grieve at the address below for £3 Sterling plus postage.

Waheed Salama, Zaranik Protected Area, P. O. Box 3, El Salam, El Arish, North Sinai, Egypt.
Andrew Grieve, Hillcrest, Whitgift, near Goole, Humberside DN14 8HL, U. K.

Plate 2. Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*, in 1990 over 13,000 were counted at Zaranik and Lake Bardawil. (*W. Salama*)

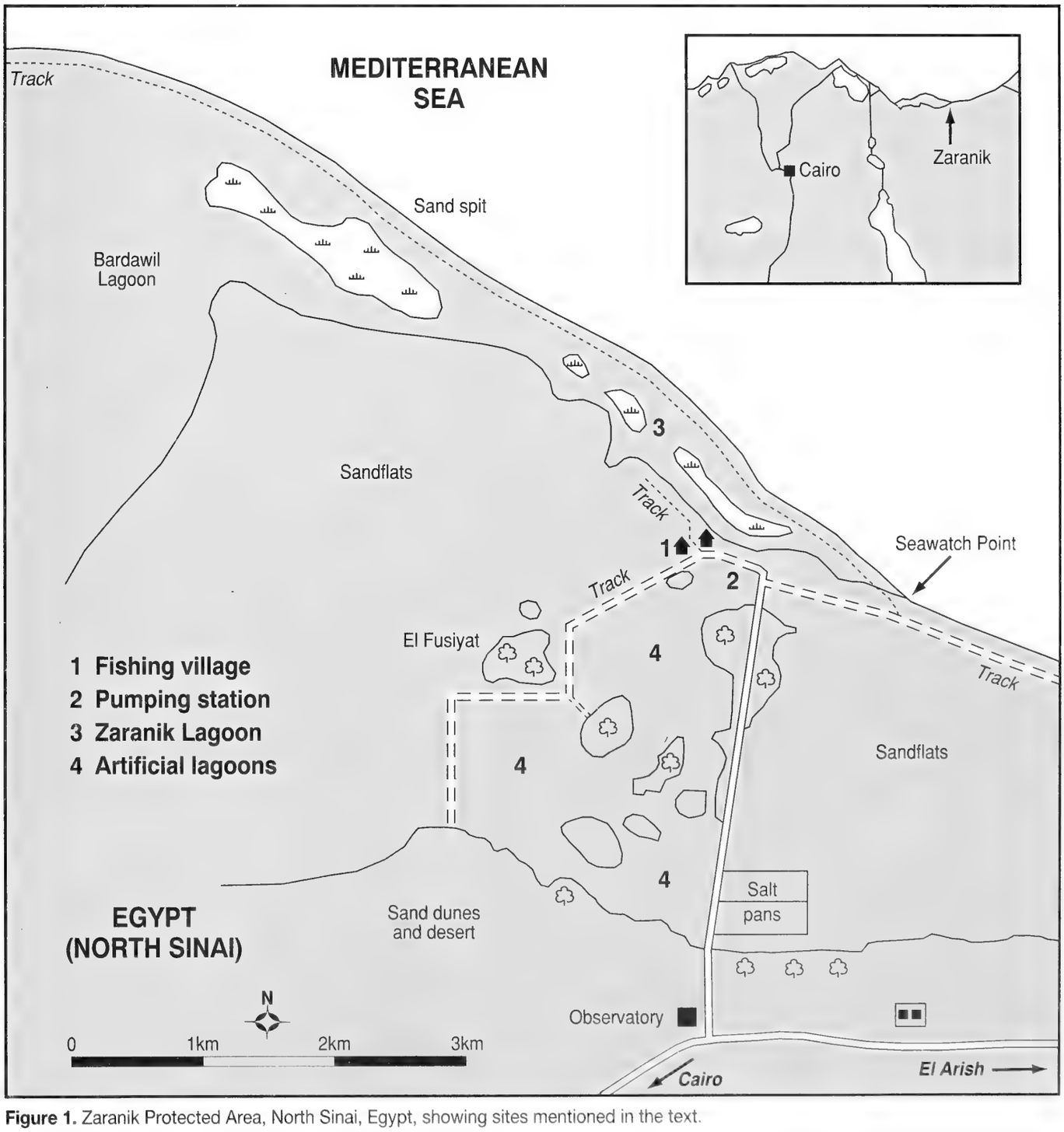

Figure 1. Zaranik Protected Area, North Sinai, Egypt, showing sites mentioned in the text.

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PHOTO spot

Philby's and Arabian Partridges

Two species of *Alectoris* partridges are endemic to the Arabian Peninsula: Philby's Partridge *Alectoris philbyi* (named after the famous Arabian traveller and explorer) and Arabian Partridge *A. melanocephala*. Until the late 1970s little published information was available on either and very few observers had encountered the scarcer and less widespread Philby's Partridge. Since then, greatly increased birding activity has substantially clarified the altitudinal ranges and distribution of both species.

Arabian Partridge is widespread within south-west and southern Arabia east to Dhofar (Oman) with an apparently disjunct population in the Jabal Akhdar region of northern Oman, occurring from sea level to (at least) 2,800 metres. Accordingly, the species may be encountered within a remarkably wide range of habitats. By contrast Philby's Partridge is restricted to the montane zone of the highlands of south-west Saudi Arabia and (North) Yemen. Both species occasionally occur at the same locality at the lower limits of the altitudinal range of Philby's Partridge e.g. at Kawkaban on the highland plateau of (North) Yemen but throughout much of their respective ranges the two species are altitudinally allopatric.

In contrast to the wide range of habitats occupied by Arabian Partridge, Philby's is a bird of the barren rocky slopes and plateaux of the south-west Arabian highlands. It occurs from 1,400, but more typically between 2,300 and 3,700 metres, at the summit of Jabal an Nabi Shu'ayb - the highest point in Arabia. This species is apparently commonest in the lightly vegetated or (seasonally) completely barren cultivated terraces of the uplands whilst Arabian is typically associated with substantial vegetation, including relict juniper forest, or other types of cover such as rocky hillsides and areas with boulders.

As demonstrated by the accompanying photographs, both species are highly distinctive and unlikely to be confused in the field. While they were treated by Watson (Sympatry in palearctic *Alectoris*. - *Evolution* 16 (1962): 11-19.) as a 'pair' in the context of their geographical distribution, within the *Alectoris* genus as a whole they are clearly not a 'species pair', from a strictly taxonomic perspective. Their substantial structural differences would appear to strongly indicate that they are unlikely to have derived through evolution from the same ancestral stock. Philby's Partridge is usually treated as part of the Chukar *A. chukar* superspecies, closely resembling this species in structure. Arabian Partridge is larger (it is the most massive species in the genus), longer-tailed and deeper-bellied.

The photographs presented here well illustrate the plumage differences between these species but a few key features may be mentioned. Perhaps the most distinctive field characteristic, in comparison with other congeners is the extensive uniform black lores, ear coverts, chin, throat and upper breast of Philby's (see plate 1). Both species show a white supercilium but this is much broader in Arabian, contrasting markedly with the black crown and thin black eyestripe. The rear of the eyestripe is contiguous with the blackish outer ear coverts, this coloration extending onto the throat and down the centre of the upper breast, often as a remarkably long thin black 'bib'. The inner ear coverts, chin and throat are white, producing a strong contrast. The combined impact of these features presents an exceptionally striking head pattern. Interestingly, the conspicuously long tail of Arabian (see plate 5) is entirely grey, lacking the rufous coloration present in the tail of all other species in the genus.

 Rodney Martins & Guy M. Kirwan

It would be unwise to make assertions as to the evolutionary history and geographical origins of Arabia's endemic birds without a proper assessment of a wide range of relevant factors. However it seems clear that the ranges of these two partridges conspicuously demonstrate the palearctic affinities within the endemic avifauna of Arabia and adjacent regions. The distinctive genus *Alectoris* appears to be almost quintessentially palearctic in its distribution. The occurrence of two species at, or beyond, its southern limits demonstrates the influence of Pleistocene conditions on the distribution of the fauna and habitat zones of Arabia during the geologically recent past. The ecology, breeding biology and conservation requirements of both species are virtually unknown, offering an interesting opportunity for future study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the following who supplied photographic material for this feature: P. Bison, C. G. Bradshaw, X. Eichaker, S. Kennedy, S. F. Newton, B. Pambour and R. F. Porter. Mike Jennings generously provided the latest maps from the Atlas of Breeding Birds of Arabia (ABBA) project, whilst Effie Warr furnished a wealth of unpublished information as well as copies of some key references.

Rodney Martins & Guy M. Kirwan, 6 Connaught Road, Norwich NR2 3BP, U.K.

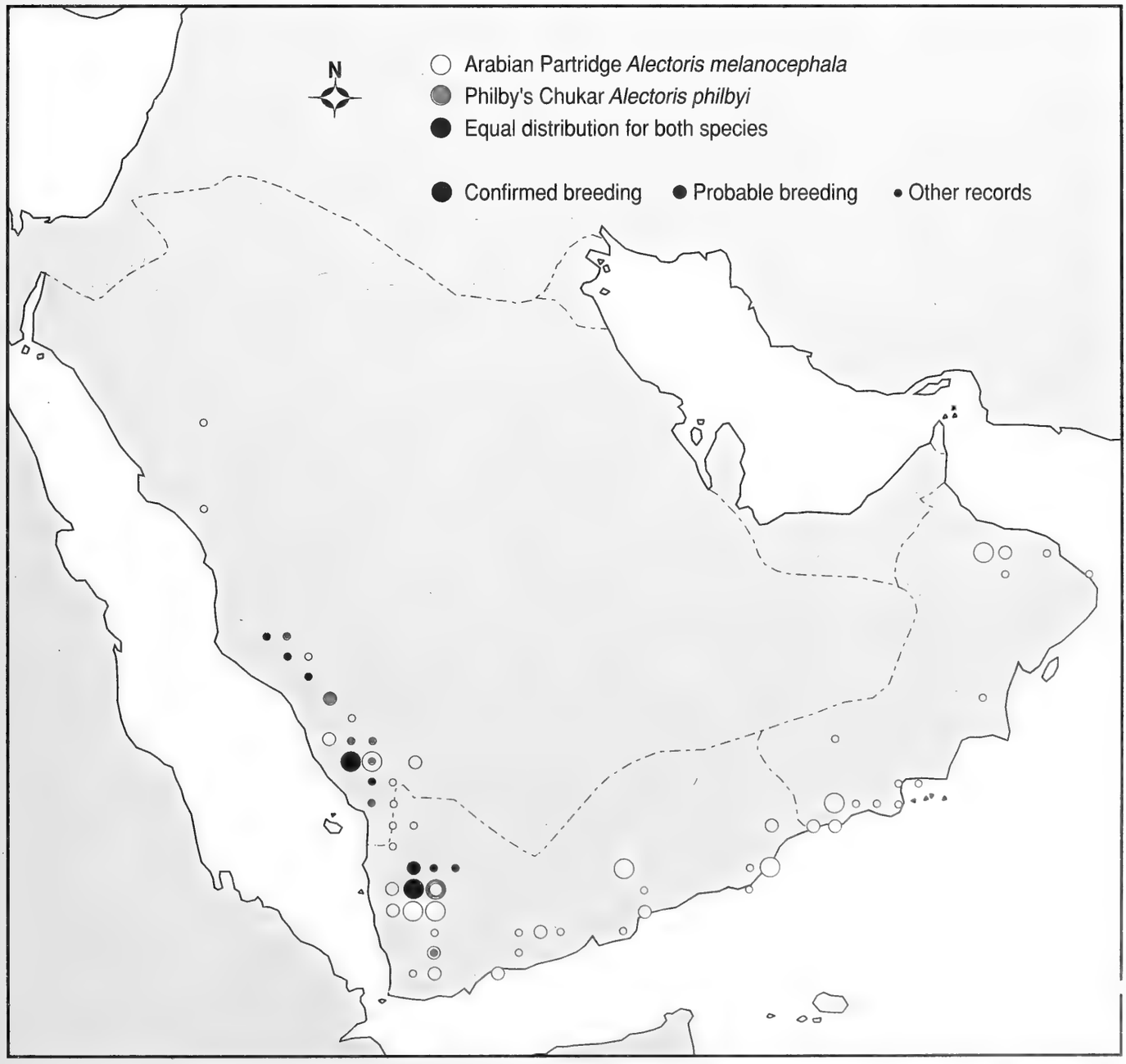

Figure 1. Distribution of Philby's Partridge *Alectoris philbyi* and Arabian Partridge *A. melanocephala (after Jennings 1995 - An interim atlas of the breeding birds of Arabia).*

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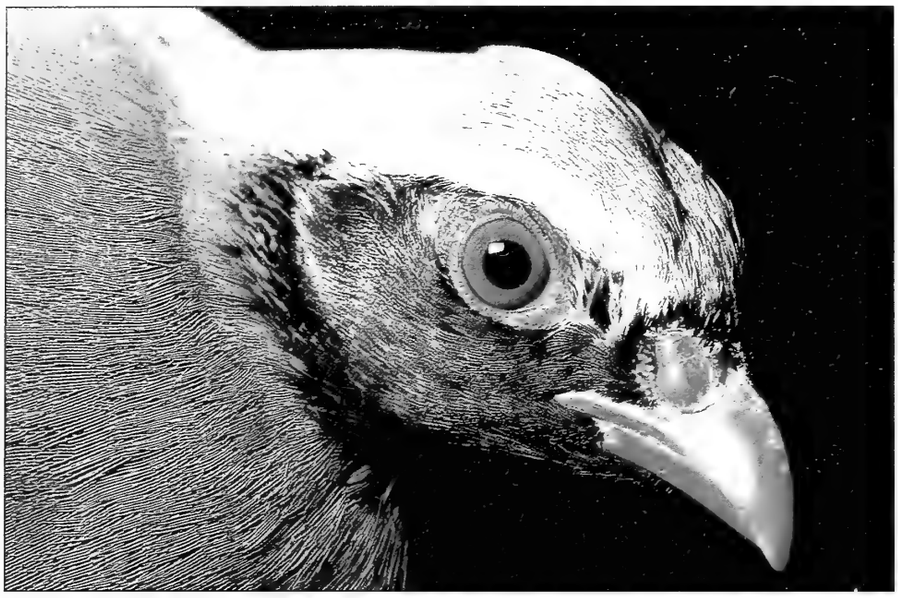

Plate 1. Philby's Partridge *Alectoris philbyi*, Taif, Saudi Arabia. (*X. Eichaker/NWRC*)

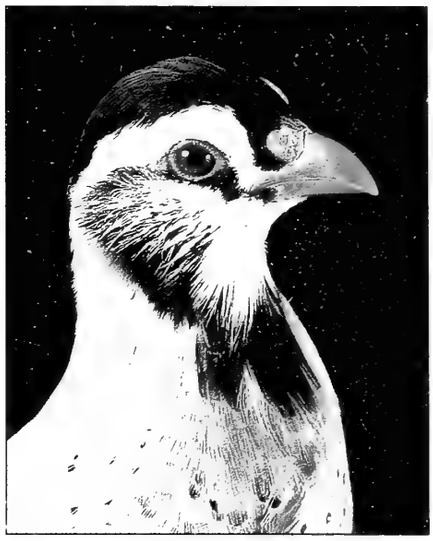

Plate 2. Arabian Partridge *Alectoris melanocephala*, Taif, Saudi Arabia. (*X. Eichaker/NWRC*)

Plate 3. Arabian Partridge *Alectoris melanocephala*, Raydah, Saudi Arabia, August 1990. (*B. Pambour/NWRC*)

Plate 4. Arabian Partridge *Alectoris melanocephala*, Saudi Arabia. (*X. Eichaker*)

Plate 5. Arabian Partridge *Alectoris melanocephala*, road to Al Tawilla, (North) Yemen. (*S. Kennedy*)

Plate 6. Philby's Partridge *Alectoris philbyi*, Jabal an Nabi Shu'ayb, (North) Yemen, December 1995. (*S. Kennedy*)

PROFILE

Dr. Abdulaziz H. Abuzinada

Dr. Abuzinada has been instrumental in crystallising the emergent Arabian conservation movement. A former professor of botany, he has headed Saudi Arabia's National Commission for Wildlife Conservation & Development (NCWCD) since its inception in 1986, and has established a solid foundation for wildlife conservation in Saudi Arabia by developing a national network of protected areas. His efforts to reintroduce, through captive breeding, a number of endangered species (some extinct in the wild) have all been remarkably successful. Arabian Oryx, Rheem and Idmi Gazelles, and Houbara Bustard have been successfully reintroduced to some of their former range in the Kingdom.

The leadership of Dr. Abuzinada was crucial in combating the ecological damage caused by the Gulf War. The rescue and rehabilitation of birds and marine mammals, conducted by an international team under his guidance, substantially lessened the impact of the conflict on the region's fauna.

Dr. Abuzinada also plays an important role in several key international conservation bodies. He is a vice-chairman of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, as well as chairman of its newly formed Arabian Plant Specialists Group. Currently he is also serving as chairman of the IUCN regional Advisory Council for North Africa, West Asia and Central Asia and has played an important role in the biodiversity programme of IUBS where he has been a member of its executive board. He is, of course, familiar to OSME members as a vice president of the society, in which role he continues until 2001. Finally, Dr. Abuzinada is chief editor of *Arabian Wildlife* magazine and he co-edits the *Fauna of Saudi Arabia* series. He has opened a dialogue with conservationists in the region with a view to forging further cooperation, and this is bearing fruit. Furthermore he has also been able to give a distinct Arabian identity to the pursuit of conservation, through the incorporation of conservation sensitive elements from the culture of the region. Dr Abuzinada's contribution has not gone unnoticed by the wider conservation community, indeed considerable international recognition has come his way: including the Fred Pakkard Award of IUCN, as well as acclaim from prominent pressure groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth.

S. Fazi

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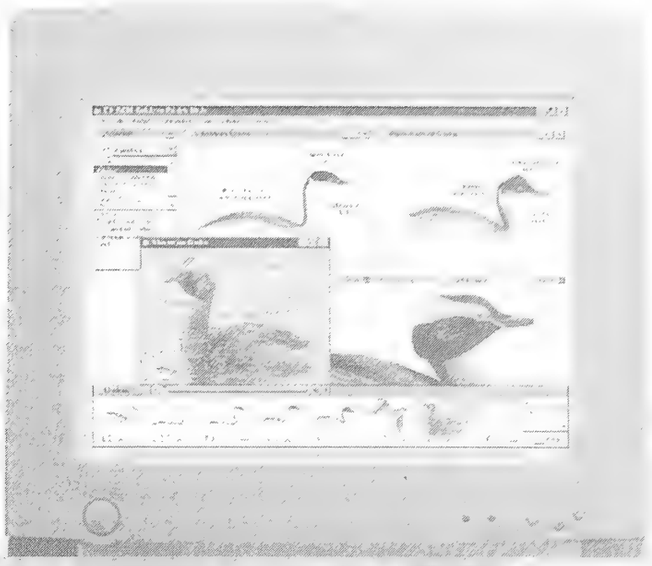

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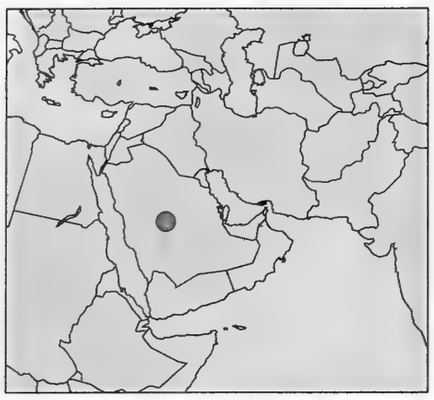
The birds of Thumamah, Central Province, Saudi Arabia

FRANK RIETKERK AND TIM WACHER



A total of 227 species were recorded on the Thumamah Estate between 1988 and 1994, including Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, a new species for Saudi Arabia. 33 species bred, including Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, the first record in Saudi Arabia.
Basra Reed Warbler Acrocepahlus griseldis was identified at Thumamah in autumn 1991, and in 1993 and 1994 up to 1000-2000 were estimated in the alfalfa fields; a major concentration of this localised Middle Eastern bird. Other species new to the Riyadh area were Oystercatcher Haematopus ostralegus, Eversmann's Redstart Phoenicurus erythronotus, Common Rosefinch Carpodacus erythrinus and Cinereous Bunting Emberiza cineracea. A few species recorded in an unpublished 1984-85 checklist are considered erroneous.

INTRODUCTION

THIS PAPER PROVIDES new information on the birds of the Central Province of Saudi Arabia, adding to the data collected in the Riyadh area by Stagg (1987). It is a summary of field observations made over a period of seven years (October 1988-March 1992 by FER and 1993-94 by TW) on the Thumamah Estate (25° 30'N, 49° 30'E), approximately 70 km north of Riyadh. Both authors were working at the King Khalid Wildlife Research Centre (KKWRC), based at Thumamah and managed by the Zoological Society of London for the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD). During the first three and a half years a small number of records were contributed by other KKWRC staff members, in particular Nick Lindsay and Dr. Douglas Williamson, while Peter Symens of the NCWCD visited Thumamah several times and organised a small bird ringing project on the dairy farm in autumn 1991. His data are incorporated in this report. Between April 1992 and October 1993 numerous visits to Thumamah were also made by Tom Tarrant, then working in Riyadh. We have included his most significant records.

Thumamah is the former estate of the late King Khalid bin Abdul-Aziz al Saud. It covers a narrow strip of 156 km^2 between the Riyadh-Majma'ah road and the Buwayb Escarpment. Within its fenced boundaries, the Thumamah Estate contains a variety of natural desert habitats as well as a number which are man-made. The presence of the latter, which were created and maintained with large amounts of water pumped up from deep aquifers, has had an enormous impact on the local avifauna. Permanently available fresh water, green crops and tamarisk windbreaks are not unique to Thumamah, but are becoming a common feature throughout large parts of the Kingdom. The avifauna of Thumamah is therefore typical of both the natural desert and the much more recent agricultural developments in the country. Access to the estate is limited, and despite fairly intense grazing by the few herds of camel and sheep on the estate, much of the original vegetation was intact at the time of writing.

Thumamah has the same climate as the rest of the Central Province of Saudi Arabia. Summer lasts from late April to late September and is extremely hot and arid, with daytime temperatures often exceeding 40°C and a humidity of less than 5%. Winter from December to early March can be very cold with frequent night frosts; this season also brings most rain. Occasional showers occur in spring, which is short and relatively humid. Autumn is dry and warm. The winter of 1988/89 was unusually dry

and cold whilst winter 1991/92 was very wet and cold, particularly in December. Summer 1991 was relatively cool, which was considered to be a result of the persistent high smog drifting over the Arabian Peninsula from the burning oil wells in Kuwait. Rain in particular had a strong influence on the presence and distribution of birds at Thumamah. For instance, after the dry winter of 1988/89, most spring migrants were concentrated in the alfalfa fields, because vegetation in the surrounding desert developed only sparingly. The spring of 1994 was also dry, and again most birds were observed in the alfalfa fields and pivots. In other springs, many birds were in the main wadis and in well-vegetated areas along the base of the escarpment.

LOCALITIES

Dairy farm

The dairy farm at Thumamah covers an area of approximately 2 km^2 in the centre of the estate, and dates from the early 1980s. It consists of a dairy with more than 800 dairy cows kept in paddocks, two circular, centrally irrigated fields for agricultural use (pivots), a sludge pond and a small residential area with some trees and shrubs. It is entirely surrounded by a fence. The pivots are mainly used to grow alfalfa as fodder for the cows, but winter wheat and barley are also grown. Irrigation of crops is virtually continuous and puddles of varying size are almost always present, particularly on the pivot roads and in the ditches. The sludge pond covers an area of less than half a hectare close to the dairy. Water from the milking parlour and the cattle showers is pumped into a rectangular flat area surrounded by a low dyke. In winter the open water area could cover more than 1000 $metres^2$. Most of the pond consisted of a mudflat-like terrain of accumulated sludge (manure) from the dairy which dried out in summer. The pond was rather bare in 1988, and *Phragmites* and other vegetation began to take root. It became progressively more vegetated; by spring 1994 very little open mud and water was left, most being covered by tall *Phragmites* stands.

Alfalfa fields

The second major man-made habitat, part of the Royal Farm, occupies an area of more than 15 hectares between the village, the main road and KKWRC. It consists of one-hectare fields surrounded by irrigation ditches, roads and tamarisk windbreaks, which also contain a few other tree species such as *Casuarina* sp. Most fields are used to grow alfalfa, but some are occasionally used for water melon, barley or wheat. Several are left fallow, sometimes for long periods, permitting a more natural type of vegetation to develop. The cultivated fields are regularly flooded, ensuring that sufficient water reaches plants furthest from the ditches. Date palms are scattered throughout the area, some in the fields, others in the windbreaks or on the periphery.

Lowland desert

The Thumamah desert is typical of the Central Province of Saudi Arabia. It consists of gravel areas intersected by runnels and patches of sandy desert with very little relief. The gravel areas are poorly vegetated, but tussock grasses, low shrubs and a variety of annual and perennial plant species can be found in the runnels and sandy areas. Livestock grazing has a significant impact on this habitat, and certain areas near the base of the escarpment and around the village and dairy farm are severely degraded. A few wadis and depressions at the escarpments base hold acacias and larger shrubs.

Buwayb Escarpment

The eastern boundary of the Thumamah Estate runs along the top of the Buwayb Escarpment. Its lower part consists of a flat terrace covered with gravel plains

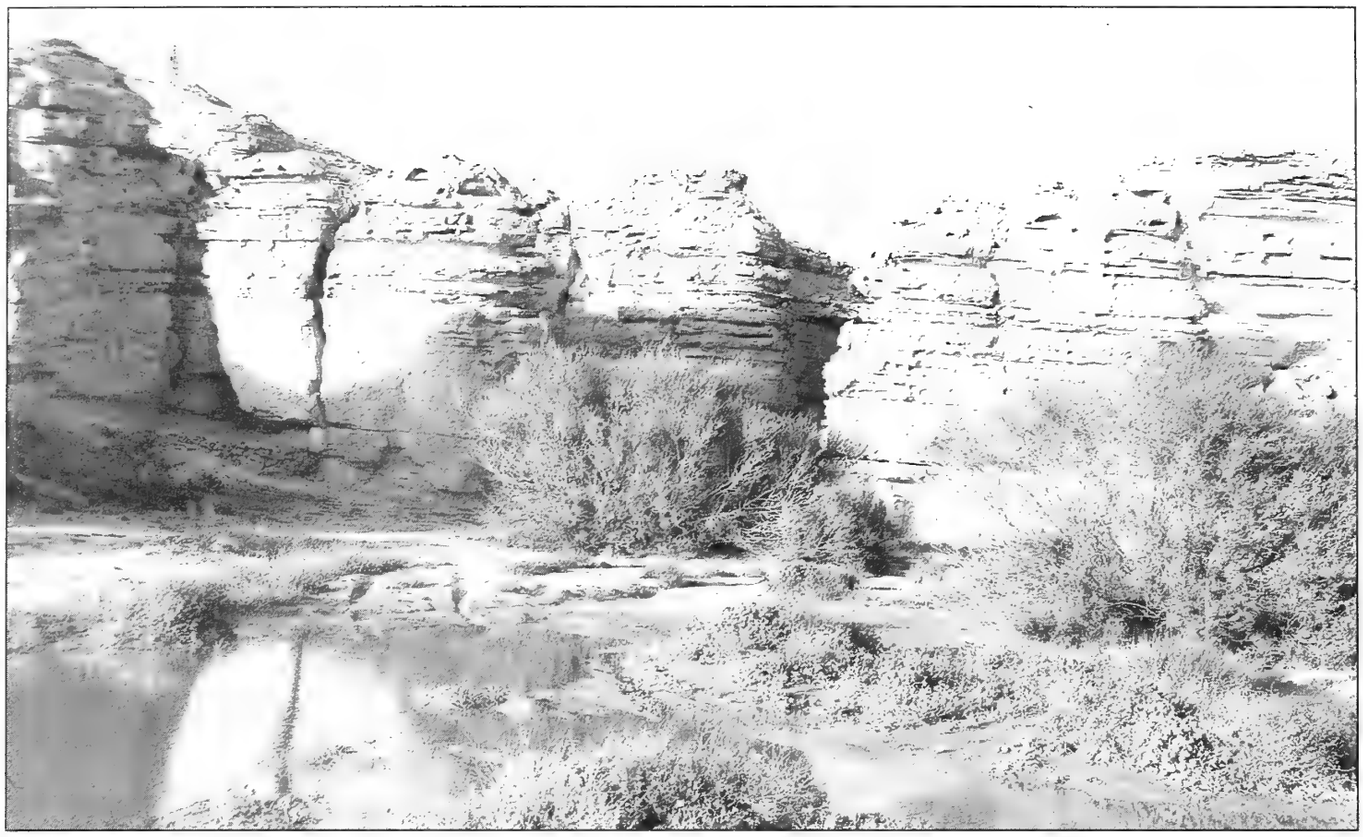


Plate 1. Vegetation at the foot of Buwayb Escarpment (Saudi Arabia), after spring rain. (*Frank Rietkerk*)

Plate 2. Low desert norh-east of Buwayb Escarpment (Saudi Arabia). (*Frank Rietkerk*)

intersected by runnels and a few large wadis. Steep cliffs rise from the terrace to a height of 300 metres. Much of the escarpment is inaccessible, but just north of KKWRC a road leads into the hills to a wide wadi with stands of acacias and a prolific spring vegetation of mainly annual species. The west side of the escarpment is intersected by steep-sided, narrow canyons, many of which are vegetated to the base of the escarpment. A few depressions at the base of the escarpment often retain water for several weeks to even months after the rains.

Gazelle enclosure
This covers an area of 560 hectares on gravely terrain in the lowland desert on the western edge of the Thumamah Estate. It attracts more birds than the surrounding desert because of the permanent availability of fresh water and food for the animals, as well as a mixed stand of *Casuarina, Eucalyptus* and *Acacia* near the entrance.

Cooling tanks
A number of cooling tanks are scattered around the Thumamah Estate. Water pumped up from a deep aquifer has a temperature of 80°C and needs to be cooled before use. The cooling tanks supply water for irrigating the alfalfa fields, as well as for general use in the village and for the animals. The tanks are about 600 metres^2 in area and are obviously attractive to migratory birds, although they contain no fish and few plants. They do attract insects, and birds passing through often feed on these. In the text the cooling tanks have been given the name of their location, e.g. the pen cooling tank is that closest to the gazelle breeding pens.

Others
A wide variety of drought-resistant plants, shrubs and trees can be found in the village and around the KKWRC buildings. These vegetated areas are particularly attractive to migrating passerines. The gazelle breeding pens, located between the alfalfa fields and the gazelle enclosure, also attract birds due to the presence of water and the many fences in otherwise rather open terrain. During 1992 a new central irrigation pivot was created in an area of flat desert between the gazelle breeding pens and the enclosure. It had attracted large numbers of birds by the end of 1992.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Key to status abbreviations and definitions:

B	= breeding species	**B?**	= possible breeding species
R	= resident	**M**	= migrant
W	= winter visitor	**S**	= summer visitor
I	= irregular visitor (no obvious seasonal preference)	**V**	= vagrant (one or two records)

Abundant = species found in large numbers in the right season or throughout the year. Very few species fall into this category.

Common = species always found, in the right season or throughout the year, in reasonable numbers on the estate.

Uncommon = species found regularly in small numbers. A minimum of ten and a maximum of 20 records were used for this category.

Scarce = species seen on at least three but less than ten occasions.

Rare visitors, or vagrants = species seen once or twice.

Combinations, such as scarce/uncommon, are used if the number of records is indeterminate (i.e. when a species was seen on the estate on several occasions within a time period, but it appeared likely that the records concerned the same bird(s)).

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (V) Rare visitor. One on the palace cooling tank from 28 October-7 November 1991.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* (W) Scarce winter visitor from December-January. Three or four records with a maximum of five on 18 December 1991 on the dairy farm, of which one remained until 20 December 1991. Single birds were on the palace cooling tank from 22-23

December 1989 (found dead on 24th), on 19 December 1991 (possibly from the dairy farm) and on the dairy farm on 25 January 1992.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* (V) Rare winter visitor. Two records of solitary juveniles: one on 1 December 1988 on the pen cooling tank, which flew off towards Riyadh, and one caught on 15 December 1990 on the dairy farm cooling tank, where it had been present several days. The bird was emaciated and died soon after capture.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (M) Scarce migrant. Two spring records: male on 21 May 1989 (dairy farm) and female on 20 June 1990 (alfalfa fields). Two autumn records: juvenile killed by a car on 28 October 1991 on the main road, and two on 20 August 1993 (dairy farm). Probably overlooked.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (M) Scarce migrant. Three autumn records: single juveniles on 11 September 1989 (dairy farm) and on 16 October 1991 (alfalfa fields), and two (adult and juvenile) on 21 October 1991 (dairy farm). One dead immature in April 1993.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (M) Common migrant. Autumn passage in August and September, peaking last week of August and first half of September, with singles in mid-July and 21 October 1991. Much less common in spring in April (earliest 1 April) and May, with one June record (7 June 1991). Highest autumn counts: 62 on 12 September 1990 (flock flying over the gazelle enclosure), 37 on 2 September 1991 (dairy farm) and 28 on 4 September 1991 (dairy farm). Highest spring counts: four on 16 April 1989 (alfalfa fields) and 25 April 1991 (dairy farm). Large flocks often stayed less than 24 hours, singles and small groups sometimes staying several days. Most records at the dairy farm, but occasionally on the cooling tanks or the alfalfa fields.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (M/W) Common autumn migrant between August and October, peaking second half of August and first half of September, with two July records (earliest 12 July) but no records later than 29 October. Highest counts: 42 on 13 August 1989 (palace cooling tank) and 37 on 13 September 1989 (dairy farm), but most frequent in groups of 4-15 birds. Regular winter visitor during January-March, with maximum of 13 from 14-16 February 1989. Two April, two May and one June record in 1991, all of singles (except two on 4 May) on the dairy farm. Most common heron on the cooling tanks and in the alfalfa fields.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (M) Common migrant between early August (earliest 6 August) and October (latest 29 October), peaking last week of August and first half of September. Highest autumn counts: 17 on 5 September 1991 and 16 on 8 September 1991. Much less common in spring, with seven records between 17 March and 21 June. Highest spring count: nine on 17 March 1992. Most often small flocks of 3-6 birds stayed for less than 24 hours, but sometimes single birds stayed up to ten days. No July or November-February records. Three records concerned a small flock on a cooling tank, otherwise all were on the dairy farm. A number of birds in autumn 1991 were heavily oiled and were presumably from the Gulf.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* (M) Uncommon but regular autumn migrant between late August (earliest 26 August) and November (latest 9 November), with maximum of eight on 30 August 1990 (palace cooling tank) and six on 7 September 1991. Two spring records of singles: from 30 April-13 May 1991 and on 12 April 1994. All but one record was from the dairy farm.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (M) Scarce, but regular autumn migrant in September (earliest 1 September, latest 1 October). Maximum was nine on 1 September 1989, usually singles or pairs staying less than 24 hours. A juvenile from 18-20 December 1991, probably a late migrant, and one in spring on 12 April 1994. Most records were on the dairy farm; twice observed on a cooling tank.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (M) Scarce, but regular migrant. Three spring records: 23 on 18 March 1992, and singles from 8-9 April 1990 and 2 April 1994. Small numbers between August

(earliest 23 August) and October (latest 18 October). All records were on the dairy farm.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* (V) Rare visitor. A single on the dairy farm on10-15 November 1989.

Wigeon *Anas penelope* (M/W) Scarce migrant/winter visitor. Three records between October and March: two on 21 October 1989, female from 21-25 March 1991 and female from 26 December 1991-7 January 1992, all on the dairy farm.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* (W) Rare visitor. A female or juvenile on the dairy farm on 6-30 December 1991.

Teal *Anas crecca* (M/W) Uncommon migrant and winter visitor. Earliest 9 September, latest 26 March, most frequent November-February, but maximum ten on 19 October 1989. Usually 2-5. All records on the dairy farm, except a female on the alfalfa cooling tank on 1 November 1988.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (W) Uncommon winter visitor from late October (earliest 29 October) to mid-February (latest 14 February). Maximum: eight from 24-30 December 1991. Flocks based on the dairy farm occasionally fed on new vegetation at base of escarpment. One record of two on the alfalfa cooling tank on 1 November 1989.

Pintail *Anas acuta* (M/W) Scarce migrant and winter visitor. Nine records between September (earliest 20 September) and March (latest 18 March). Maximum: nine on 12 October 1990. A female wintered from 9 November 1990 to at least 14 February 1991 on the dairy farm. Birds from the dairy farm occasionally fed along the base of the escarpment or in the alfalfa fields.

Garganey *Anas querquedula* (M/S) Common migrant. Numerous late August to late October, peaking mid-September, with two November records (latest 12 November). Autumn maxima: 35 on 10 September 1991 and 31 on 13 September 1989. Regular in spring between February (earliest 14 February) and April (latest 28 April), peaking mid-March, with maximum six on 19 March 1991. One regularly observed between 2 June and 10 August 1990, and another on 4 June 1991. Most records were from the dairy farm, but six were in the alfalfa fields on 16 October 1991 and a female was on a pool at the base of the escarpment from 19-28 April 1991.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata* (M/W) Scarce migrant and winter visitor. Three records in September-October and two in spring of singles on 17-27 February 1990 and 12 April 1994, while seven wintered from 28 October 1991 until 17 January 1992, after which numbers fell with the last bird departing on 4 March 1992. Maximum: nine on 31 October 1991. All records on the dairy farm.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (V) Rare visitor. One on the dairy farm on 21 October 1989.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (M) Scarce migrant. Five autumn records of singles between mid-August (earliest 16 August) and mid-November (latest 13 November) and one on 21 April 1990. All flew over the estate, except one drinking from a water trough in the gazelle enclosure.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* (B?/R) Common between early January (earliest 8 January) and late September (latest 27 September), most numerous in May-August. No records in October-December. Maxima: 19 on 2 August 1989, 22 on 17 July 1990 and 15 on 12 July 1991. All were on the dairy farm where a flock would gather in the alfalfa pivot to drink and bathe. Away from the dairy farm rarely more than 3-4, for instance on a carcass of a dead gazelle or preying on Ostrich eggs in the gazelle enclosure, where stone throwing behaviour was observed. It is striking that this behaviour was retained despite the fact that the Arabian Ostrich *Struthio camelus syriacus* being extinct for at least four decades. January-March records were usually of adult birds and some third-year birds, although younger immatures were observed in February 1990. First- and second-year birds became more frequent from May onwards. The highest count of first-years was seven in July 1990. Egyptian Vultures may have been more numerous in the past: an accident with an insecticide used to control flies on the dairy farm in the early 1980s led to the death of "quite a few vultures" (pers. comm. dairy farm staff).

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* (V) Rare winter visitor. Two adults on the dairy farm on 6 December 1991.

Plate 3. Black Vultures *Aegypius monachus*, Thumamah dairy farm (Saudi Arabia), December 1991. (*Frank Rietkerk*)

Plate 4. Imperial Eagles *Aquila heliaca*, adult and first year, Thumamah dairy farm (Saudi Arabia), winter 1991/92. (*Frank Rietkerk*)

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* (V) Rare autumn migrant. An adult along the main road on 10 September 1991.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* (M/S) Uncommon but regular autumn migrant between late August (earliest 29 August) and October, with one November record (9 November 1990). The majority of records were in September. Four spring records: a male from 31 March-4 April 1989, a male on 19 March 1990, a bird of unknown sex on 25 March 1991 and a female moving north along the escarpment on 11 May 1994, as well as a single summer record of a female on 4 June 1991. It was difficult to estimate numbers, as some birds appeared to stay for long periods, but were not observed daily. Probably birds stayed in the area (mainly on the dairy farm) for extended periods in autumn, roaming widely. The possibility of a steady passage in small numbers cannot be excluded. Males were less common than females.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* (V) Rare autumn visitor.An adult male on the dairy farm from 18-19 November 1990.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (M/W) Uncommon/common migrant and winter visitor. Earliest autumn record 31 August 1990, latest spring record 16 April 1990. Most frequent in September. All spring records were in 1990 and 1993. Maximum: three on 10 September 1990. Six November-February records, all single males. Some birds lingered for several days, but as with other harriers total numbers were difficult to assess. Most records were from the dairy farm, but occasionally seen in the alfalfa fields, the gazelle enclosure or along the main road.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* (M) Uncommon autumn migrant between late August (earliest 28 August) and late September (latest 30 September). Four spring records, earliest 5 April and latest 2 May. Two records of two females together, all others of singles, mostly on the dairy farm but sometimes in the alfalfa fields or by the main road. Less common than Pallid Harrier.

Ring-tailed harriers *Circus* sp. were frequently observed during August-October (16 records) and March-April (ten records), with three November-December records.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* (W) Scarce winter visitor. A total of nine records between late October (earliest 29 October) and mid-April (latest 13 April). Records possibly relate to only three birds, which lingered in the alfalfa fields, but were only rarely seen.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (M/W) Scarce/uncommon migrant and winter visitor from mid-September (earliest 14 September) to late April (latest 28 April). As with Goshawk, the total number of records (40) probably reflects only a limited number of individuals which lingered in the alfalfa fields. Occasionally seen elsewhere. Always singles and only one adult male.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* (V) Rare autumn visitor. A single of the subspecies *B.b. vulpinus* was observed from 12-15 October 1991 on the dairy farm and, probably the same, in the gazelle enclosure. Also observed by Tom Tarrant in autumn 1992.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* (B?/R/M) Uncommon resident seen in all months, except January. Strongly suspected of breeding in the escarpment either on or close to the estate, but no nest discovered. Juveniles seen occasionally in September and October. One record of two, all others of singles. Observed throughout the estate but most commonly on the dairy farm. Passage in very small numbers is likely.

Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* (V) Rare visitor. An adult on the dairy farm on 15 October 1991 and another bird in April 1993.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* (W) Fairly common winter visitor from early October (earliest 3 October) to late March (latest 28 March), although very few in winter 1993/94. Numbers fluctuated strongly, often only one or two, but 4-5 not uncommon. Maxima: 10 on 27 November 1989 and eight on 12 October 1990. Such congregations were always in the alfalfa pivot of the dairy farm, but sometimes several in the gazelle enclosure feeding on fresh carcasses. Never seen to attack live gazelles.

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* (W) Regular winter visitor in small numbers from early November (earliest 6 November) to late March (latest 28 March), with a juvenile on 11 May 1991 in the gazelle enclosure. Maximum: five in both November 1990 and January-February 1992. Most were first-years, but occasional (family?) groups usually consisted of one or two adults with some immatures, at the alfalfa pivot of the dairy farm, but singles were seen daily in the gazelle enclosure in early spring. Here they would occasionally cause fairly heavy losses among new-born gazelles, which, due to the lack of natural cover and the large numbers born in the enclosure, made easy prey for the presumably still rather inexperienced first-year birds.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* (V/S?) Rare summer visitor. Two certain records of single subadults on the dairy farm on 14 September 1990 and 3 July 1991, but a distant eagle flying over the alfalfa fields on 11 September 1989 was almost certainly this species. These records may indicate post-breeding dispersal of older young from breeding territories.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* (M) Scarce migrant. Three records in late March/April, one in September and three in late October of birds flying over. Five light phase, two dark phase.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (M) Scarce migrant. Two autumn records: one on 28 September 1990 (pen cooling tank) and two on 14 October 1991 (palace cooling tank). Two spring records, both in early May 1994 (same bird?).

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (B?/M/S/W) Uncommon/common migrant and occasional summer and winter visitor. Common only in March-April (latest 2 May), with maxima in the alfalfa fields of c.55 on 31 March 1989 and 30 on 1 April 1993, while 14 was maximum in March 1990, five in March 1991, seven in March 1992 and ten in March 1994. Five summered on the dairy farm from 21 June-16 July 1991, when breeding was possible but could not be proven. Up to four were seen almost daily on the dairy farm from 13 October 1991-25 February 1992.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (M/W) Migrant and winter visitor in small numbers, rarely more than one, but four on 29 October 1991 (dairy farm). Most were in late October-May. Three June, one July and four September records in 1989 and 1990 are now suspect, as Lesser Kestrel was not considered and cannot be eliminated retrospectively. A possible breeding species, but like Lesser Kestrel not proven. Wintering birds in the alfalfa fields were strongly resident, sometimes staying for months in the same field.

Merlin *Falco columbarius* (M/W) Scarce migrant and winter visitor, with five or six records between November (earliest 8 November) and late April (latest 21 April). A male seen several

times in April 1989 was of the subspecies *F.c. pallidus*. Others could not identified to subspecific level. Seen on the dairy farm and in the alfalfa fields.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo* (M) Scarce migrant. Five spring records in April/May and four autumn records between early September and late November (latest 29 November), but possibly only six birds involved as some records clustered and lingering suspected.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (W) Scarce winter visitor. Three records: two adults (photographed) on 10 January 1989 of the eastern subspecies *F.p. callidus* on the fence of the gazelle enclosure, a juvenile on the water tower on 23 March 1990 and an adult in the gazelle enclosure on 7 December 1991.

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides* (B?/W) Scarce visitor mostly in winter, with five records between mid-November and early March. A number of records of large falcons were almost certainly this species. Observations in April and May 1994 of an adult and at least one immature along the escarpment indicate possible breeding. Most winter records from the gazelle enclosure, where one caught a Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* in February 1992.

Sand Partridge *Ammoperdix heyi* (B/R) Common breeding resident along the base of the escarpment, with groups often coming to drink on the dairy farm in early morning. Not seen in the open desert or elsewhere on the estate. Maxima: 30+ in a green depression at the base of the escarpment on 18 May 1989 and 25-30 on 17 August 1989 on the dairy farm. Maximum number of fledglings: 16 on 7 June 1990. The total number of breeding pairs probably exceeds 25.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (B?/M/S) Uncommon migrant in August-September and April-May, whilst two males were calling in the alfalfa pivot on the dairy farm from 12-17 July 1990. Calling males were also heard from 19-21 March 1991 (dairy farm) and in spring 1994 (new pivot). A potential breeding species, but disturbance in the alfalfa fields and pivots is considerable.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* (V) Rare migrant. A single was ringed on the dairy farm on 19 September 1991 and one was seen there on 12 April 1994. Like the next species easily overlooked: both are likely to be more common than records indicate.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* (V) Rare visitor. One on the dairy farm on 13-24 October 1991.

Corncrake *Crex crex* (M) Scarce migrant. Two autumn records on 7 September 1990 and 13 September 1990. The former was in the alfalfa fields, the second a bedraggled bird being attacked by a juvenile Pallid Harrier on the dairy farm. One on 1 April 1993 in the alfalfa fields.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* (B/R) Abundant breeding resident on the dairy farm. The population increased greatly within a very short period, with the first, an adult and a juvenile on 21 June 1990. Numbers increased to 13+ on 3 July 1991 (12 juveniles), 52 in August 1991 and 75 during winter 1991/92. By January 1994 the population was estimated at 800 birds. The majority were bred on the sludge pond, but additional immigration during the period cannot be ruled out. One was ringed on the dairy farm in September 1991.

Coot *Fulica atra* (W) Uncommon but regular winter visitor on the dairy farm from October (earliest 13 October 1991) to March (latest 18 March 1992), with one or two during most winters. Maximum was six from 4 December 1991-18 March 1992.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (V) Rare migrant. One on the dairy farm on 11-17 August 1989. A new species for the Riyadh area.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (B/R/M) Common breeding resident and migrant on the dairy farm. The population grew rapidly during the study period, with the first two on 13 May 1989 and a high count in 1989 of seven from 27-29 September. In mid-February 1990 numbers grew from 20 to c.60 on 27 February, decreasing again to 18 by late March. These bred,

with the first nest noted on 23 March and the first chicks on 3 April. Other pairs were still sitting on nests on 27 May. In July some pairs bred again, by which time the total number of birds had increased to c.40. There were at least seven breeding pairs in 1990. With migrants the total increased to 110 in early September. A similar pattern occurred in 1991, but with 24 in early March and 15 nests by 25 April. There was an influx of other adults in late April, some of which also bred, leading to a total of 100 birds in late April. By 18 June, 175+ birds were present: c.100 adults, 40 juveniles and 35 downy chicks. Downy young were observed into late August. The total number of breeding pairs in 1991 probably exceeded 30, some of which bred twice. In 1993, the number of breeding pairs was estimated at 20-30. Due to the reduction in open area of the sludge pond in following years, numbers decreased to c.25 birds by May 1994. Three records away from the dairy farm: 13 on the pen cooling tank on 1 September 1989, a flock heard flying over headquarters on 2 April 1990 and two in a temporary pond at the base of the escarpment on 9 May 1994.

Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* (V) Rare migrant. One in gazelle enclosure on 13 April 1994.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* (V) Rare migrant. One spring record of 16 on 25 March 1991 and one autumn record of first one, then four from 26 August-10 September 1991, on the dairy farm.

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* (B/M/W) Rare breeding species and irregular migrant and winter visitor. Most in November-January, but two on 31 August 1991 (dairy farm) and 25 April 1989 (main road). From late January 1990, a flock of nine in the gazelle enclosure, dwindling to at least a pair in March, when two adults with two downy young were observed on 23 March. They departed by mid-June, and the species was not seen again until August 1991.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (B?/M/S) Common migrant and summer visitor. Breeding suspected in 1990 when a young juvenile seen in August. Spring passage from late March (earliest 26 March) to early June, peaking first half of May. Maxima: c.35 on 4 May 1991 and 24 on 13 May 1990. More numerous in autumn from late July to mid-October, peaking last week of August and first half of September, with one November record. Maxima: 50+ on 6 September 1989 and c.35 on 23 August 1990. Throughout June-July 1990 3-5 remained on the dairy farm and in 1991 three were present on 12 July. In September 1991 two were ringed, one of which was oiled, so possibly came from Kuwait. Majority were at the dairy farm, but single juveniles and a flock seen in the gazelle breeding pens or alfalfa fields.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* (M) Common migrant. Spring passage from mid-February to early June, peaking March. More numerous from late July to early December, peaking September. Highest spring count 11 on 5 March 1990, autumn maxima: 43 on 13 September 1990, 30+ on 5 September 1989 and c.30 on 7 September 1991. Most on the dairy farm, where two were ringed in September 1991, but occasionally in the alfalfa fields or new pivot.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* (M/W) Fairly common autumn migrant, scarce in spring and winter. Autumn passage from late August to October, with maxima of 11 from 31 August-7 September 1990 and on 8 September 1991. Spring passage mainly in May, with single records in April and June. Maximum: c.10 on 13 May 1990. Winter records of a single on 14 January 1990 and of a flock of up to six from November 1991-February 1992. All were on the dairy farm, where one was ringed in September 1991.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* (B/M/W) Rare breeding species, but fairly common migrant and winter visitor. One successful nest on the dairy farm in 1990. Passage irregular between late August and May with largest numbers October-February and scarce in spring. Maxima 19 on 12 January 1991, 16 on 20 December 1991 and 15 on 15 February 1992, but usually 2-5. All but one record came from the dairy farm, where two were ringed on 24 October 1991.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* (V) Rare visitor. Two records: two on the dairy farm from 16 July-22 August 1991 and a single there in September 1993.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* (M) Scarce migrant; all were singles on the dairy farm. Three late April-early May, three late July-early September, and one in February. Three were identified as *C.l. columbinus* (in April, May and July).

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* (M) Scarce migrant, with six spring records in late February and March and five or six in autumn, mostly in late July-August, but one on the dairy farm September-October 1992. Maximum 59 from 4-6 March 1992 in the alfalfa pivots of the dairy farm, which coincided with similarly large falls of this species elsewhere in Arabia (Kirwan 1992). Spring records were mostly of small groups of adults in full breeding plumage with some first-years. In autumn, usually singles, but several in late August 1993 and four on 30 July 1994 (new pivot). All were from the dairy farm and new pivot except for nine in the gazelle enclosure on 27 February 1992.

European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (V) Rare autumn visitor. An adult on the dairy farm on 18-29 August 1990 was confirmed by P. Symens.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (V) Rare spring migrant. Two on the dairy farm on 10 May 1991 and a single at the base of the escarpment on 10 May 1994.

Red-wattled Plover *Hoplopterus indicus* (V) Rare visitor. One on the dairy farm from 16-22 January 1994 was the fifth Saudi record away from the Gulf.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* (V) Rare autumn visitor. An adult and juvenile on the dairy farm from 16 November-2 December 1990.

White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura* (V) Rare migrant. Singles on the dairy farm on 2 October 1991 and 16 April 1993.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (W) Uncommon/common winter visitor on the dairy farm from mid-October (earliest 15 October) to mid-February (latest 14 February), with maximum numbers between mid-November and mid-January (28 in 1989/90, 23 in 1990/91, 50 in 1991/92, c.100 in 1992/93 and 10+ 1993/94).

Sanderling *Calidris alba* (M) Scarce spring migrant, with five records between April (earliest 8 April) and late May (latest 22 May). Maximum four from 30 April-4 May 1991. One autumn record of two on 3 September 1991, one remaining until 11 September. All records were from the dairy farm.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* (M/W) Abundant migrant and common winter visitor on the dairy farm. Autumn passage from late July (earliest 24 July), with maximum of c.175 birds on 17 October 1991. Winter numbers usually 30-75. Spring passage most noticeable in May, with highest count of 150+ on 13 May 1990. Latest spring record 11 June 1991. Most were on the dairy farm, but occasionally in inundated alfalfa fields or on cooling tanks. In September-October 1991 29 were ringed on the dairy farm. Several of these were seriously oiled.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* (M/W) Scarce migrant on the dairy farm. Three autumn records between 28 August and 11 October, and a single on 6 December 1991. Three spring records: one on 25 March 1991, two from 30 April-4 May 1991 and one on 16 April 1993. Maximum three from 28 August-15 September 1990.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* (M) Common migrant from late March (earliest 28 March) to early June (latest 5 June), peaking first half of May, and from late July (earliest 27 July) to early November (latest 8 November), peaking September. More numerous in spring, with maxima: 43 on 8 May 1991 and 31 on 13 May 1990. Highest autumn count: seven on 8 September 1991. Most were on the dairy farm, but occasionally in the alfalfa fields or pools at the base of the escarpment. Two were ringed on the dairy farm in September 1991.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* (M/W) Uncommon autumn migrant and winter visitor from mid-August (earliest 13 August) to January (latest 19 January), peaking in September. Maxima: seven on 18 September 1990 and five from 29 November-30 December 1991. Two spring records of singles in March. All records were from the dairy farm.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (M) Scarce migrant on the dairy farm from late July (earliest 24 July) to mid-September (latest 16 September). Maximum five on 3 September 1989; usually recorded in singles. One spring record in May 1992.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (M/W) Very common migrant and increasing winter visitor. Autumn passage from late July (earliest 26 July) to late October, peaking first half of September. Maximum c.150 from 10-11 September 1991. Winter numbers increasing from 1-3 in 1989/90 to 18 in 1991/92. Spring passage mainly in March and early April, but several May records (latest 13 May). Maximum c.80 on 28 March 1989. Only twice seen away from the dairy farm. Two were ringed there in September 1991.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocryptes minima* (V) Rare visitor. One on dairy farm from 22-29 October 1991.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* (M/W) Fairly common migrant and increasing winter visitor. Autumn passage from mid-August (earliest 17 August) to late October, commonest mid-September, but maximum c.12 on 18 October 1991. Probably more common than numbers suggest. Winters in variable numbers: one in 1989/90, three in 1990/91 and ten in 1991/92. Spring passage hardly noticeable, last recorded on 9 May. Most records were from the dairy farm, where one was ringed in September 1991.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (M) Scarce migrant. Three autumn records: on 15 October 1989, 18-30 September 1990 and 31 August-2 September 1991, and one in spring on 18 March 1992. All were of singles on the dairy farm.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* (V) Rare spring migrant. A single on the dairy farm from 23 April-3 May 1990.

Curlew *Numenius arquata* (V) Rare autumn migrant. Two singles on the dairy farm, on 13-17 August 1989 and 18 September 1990.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* (M) Scarce autumn migrant. Three records on the dairy farm: a single on 19 October 1989, two from 21-22 October 1991, one remaining until 12 November 1991, and several September-December 1992.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* (M/W) Uncommon autumn migrant and winter visitor from late July (earliest 24 July) to January (latest 19 January), peaking late August-early September, but never more than three. One spring record of up to three in March 1990. All records from the dairy farm.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (M/W) Regular migrant in small numbers from mid-March (earliest 18 March) to early May (latest 8 May) and from late August (earliest 22 August) to late October (latest 29 October). One June (5 June 1990) and one December record (7 December 1989). Maximum five on 23 August 1991, but 2-3 frequent. Birds in autumn 1991 were oiled.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (M/W) Uncommon autumn and scarce spring migrant, with most in late August-late September. Maximum four on 17 September 1989. One wintered from 24 January-7 April 1990. All but one was at the dairy farm.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* (M/W) Common autumn migrant. Winter visitor and spring migrant in small numbers. Autumn passage from early July (earliest 2 July) to late September, with maxima of c.25 in mid-August 1989, 6 August 1990 and 7 September 1990. From late September to mid-April usually 2-5 present; spring passage hardly noticeable. No records in

May/June. Commonest on the dairy farm, but frequent on the cooling tanks or alfalfa fields.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* (M/W) Very common migrant and winter visitor in small numbers. Bulk of spring passage in last week of April and first half of May, with maximum 146 on 8 May 1991. Only two June records. Autumn passage from mid-July to late October, peaking second half of August and September, with maximum of c.50 on 7 September 1990 and 31 August 1991. Winters in small numbers (up to five). Rarely seen away from the dairy farm, where one was ringed in September 1991.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (M) Uncommon spring migrant, mainly in April (earliest 3 April) and May (latest 22 May), and scarce in autumn, with four August and September records. Maxima seven on 30 April 1990 and six on 18 May 1989; only singles in autumn. All records were from the dairy farm, except singles in an inundated alfalfa field from 12-16 May 1989 and the new pivot on 20 August 1993.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* (M) Common migrant. Spring passage from late March (earliest 18 March) to early May (latest 6 May), with maxima of nine on 9 April 1989 and seven on 18 April 1991. Commoner in autumn from early July (earliest 1 July 1991) to mid-September (latest 20 September). Single June (26 June 1991) and October records (16-21 October 1991). Highest autumn counts: 27 on 24 July 1990, 25 on 10 August 1990 and 18 on 19 July 1991. Most frequently seen on the dairy farm, but not uncommon on cooling tanks, in the alfalfa fields and the gazelle breeding pens.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* (M) Scarce, with four spring (late April to mid-May) and three autumn records (late July to early September). Maximum five from 23 April-9 May 1990. A single remained almost two months in autumn 1990. All were at the dairy farm, except a single in an inundated alfalfa field on 16 May 1989.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* (M) Scarce autumn migrant at the dairy farm. Three records: two on 16-17 September 1989, single on 3 October 1990 and five on 31 August-4 September 1991.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* (M/W) Uncommon migrant and winter visitor in variable numbers from late November (earliest 23 November) to late April, with one on 3 May 1990 and an unusual summer record on 9 July 1993. A flock of 22 to c.60 remained from 27 November-14 December 1989, and another flock of 21 was seen on 17 March 1992. Other records concerned singles or small flocks of 2-4, sometimes staying for weeks.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* (V) Two records on the dairy farm: a bird with pink legs (possibly *L. argentatus*) on 12 September 1991, and a smallish second-year bird on 18 March 1992.

Identification of this complex is very difficult in Saudi Arabia. Birds often show characteristics of more than one (sub)species and clearly identifiable birds are rarely seen. This is no doubt mainly due to the fact that adults in breeding plumage are rare in interior Saudi Arabia – most birds are immatures.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (V) Rare spring migrant. An adult on the dairy farm on 25 April 1991.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* (M/S?) Scarce summer visitor between late April (earliest 30 April) and late August (latest 23 August), but commonest in June. Unclear migration pattern. Largest numbers: c.40 on the pen cooling tank on 19 June 1990 and seven there on 17 June 1991. All records were from the dairy farm and the cooling tanks. Some stayed for extended periods, but larger flocks were only seen in early morning, so may just have roosted. Both juveniles and apparent adults were present, although many adults had very dark bills with little red at the base. A tern showing some characteristics of Arctic Tern *S. paradisaea* at the dairy farm from 30 April-4 May 1991, in the company of up to three Common Terns is currently being evaluated.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* (V) Rare summer visitor. Only two certain records: singles on 18 May 1990 and from 4-18 June 1990. Two other records, singles in April and June 1990, may have been this species, but Saunders' Tern *S. saundersi* could not be ruled out.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (M) Fairly common migrant. Spring passage from late April (earliest 30 April) to mid-June (latest 20 June), with seven on 13 May 1990. More numerous on autumn passage from mid-August (earliest 12 August) to late September, once until 22 October. Autumn maxima: 16 on 10 September 1991 and 12 on 12 September 1989. Often lingering for several days or even weeks (e.g. September/October 1991).

Rock Dove *Columba livia* (B/R) Abundant breeding resident in the escarpment, flocks of several hundred often feeding in the alfalfa pivots. Majority typical *C. livia*, but there has been much interbreeding with domesticated pigeons from the Royal Farm. Breeding population unknown as not all birds on the dairy farm originated from the estate, but probably 50-100 pairs.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (B/R) Abundant breeding resident particularly in the alfalfa fields, but also in the village and in well vegetated areas of the escarpment. One of the most common birds of Thumamah. Breeding population in excess of 100 pairs. Flocks of 200+ not uncommon in the more neglected parts of the alfalfa fields in autumn and winter.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* (B?/M/S) Uncommon/common migrant and occasional summer visitor. Suspected breeding in 1990 and 1991, but nest not found and birds not seen regularly. Spring passage from mid-April to mid-May, with maximum of 19 on 10 May 1991 in acacias at the base of the escarpment. Four summer records, all on the dairy farm: two on 17 July 1990, ten on 24 July 1990, two on 12 July 1991 and one on 21 August 1993, which may have been an early migrant. Autumn passage in September, with 100+ on 14 September 1990: usual flock size fewer than ten. One October record of a single on the dairy farm on 18 October 1991, where one was ringed in September 1991.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* (B/R) Possibly bred in 1990, when two or three were in the alfalfa fields on 11 June, 11 August and 24 August. Breeding was confirmed in both 1993 and 1994, when a nest was found on window ledge of KKWRC headquarters.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* (B/R) Breeding resident in small numbers. Fairly common in March-October but only one record from December-January. Number of breeding pairs probably about five. Most frequent in the alfalfa fields, gazelle breeding pens and on the dairy farm, often feeding on dirt roads.

Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* (I) Irregular visitor, most frequently seen from early February to mid-April 1989, with a maximum of c.20. Two other records: at least three on 7 March 1990 and a small flock on 18 September 1990. All were in the alfalfa fields, except for a single flying over KKWRC headquarters in March 1989.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* (M) Scarce migrant. Six records, possibly relating to three birds: on 6 September 1989, from 10-24 August 1990 and from 9-11 May 1991. All records were from the alfalfa fields.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* (B?/R) Rare resident on the dairy farm. At least one regularly during 1989 and autumn 1991. Two there on 2 October 1991, one of which was ringed. Two were frequently seen in the gazelle enclosure from August 1993, where they roosted in one of the storage barns. Only adults seen. One pair perhaps breeds.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* (B/R) Rare resident, with one or two pairs in the escarpment, but regularly seen along the main road and elsewhere at night. Most birds rather dark except one photographed in the gazelle enclosure in early spring 1989, which was very pale (*desertorum*).

Little Owl *Athene noctua* (V) Rare visitor. Two records of singles on 25 November 1989 in the gazelle enclosure and on 23 December 1989 at the base of the escarpment.

European Nigntjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* (V) Rare migrant. One photographed on 27 April 1989 and one of the Iranian subspecies *C.e. unwini* was found dead on the main road on 12 November 1989.

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* (V) Rare migrant. A corpse was found on the main road on 25 September 1989 and one was seen in the early morning of 14 March 1994.

Common Swift *Apus apus* (M) Fairly common spring migrant from late February (earliest 19 February) to May (latest 20 May), peaking late March-April, with two June records of singles on 13 June 1989 and 4 June 1991. Maximum 150+ on 18 April 1991. Most flocks contained 10-50. Only two certain autumn records, both of singles, on 4 September 1989 and 15 September 1991. Often associated with Pallid Swift *A. pallidus* and in good light conditions easily separable.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (M) Very common spring migrant from late January (earliest 25 January) to early June (latest 13 June), peaking February and late April-early May, with 150+ on 19 February 1992. Not certainly observed in autumn, but two December records. Migration pattern obscure, with most obvious passage in February, often with House Martin *Delichon urbica*, west along the escarpment, when flocks descend to hawk over the alfalfa fields before continuing. Passage in April-May usually of large flocks, sometimes with Swift, Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*, with a less obvious direction. Flocks of unidentified swifts flying over at great height frequent in April, may have been this species. Passage may be continuous between late January and early May, with only singles, pairs or very small flocks until mid-June and sometimes staying for several days in one location.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (M/W) Scarce but regular spring migrant mainly in April, with one record of 5-10 on 2 April 1993 and eight records between 16 April and 2 May of between one and five. Also one unexpected winter record on 1 December 1991 when a single was over the palace cooling tank in bad weather. Most records were of birds hawking over the alfalfa fields, usually with other swifts.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* (I) Scarce and irregular visitor. Three records, all of singles: on 7 March 1990 (with Pallid Swift and House Martin), on 10 August 1990 (solitary) and on 26 January 1991 (with House Martin).

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (V) A vagrant in the alfalfa fields on 8 September 1989.

Little Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* (B/R) Regular but thinly distributed breeding resident, with about five pairs nesting at the base of the escarpment. Scarce in October-March, but fairly common in the alfalfa fields and on the dairy farm in July-September, when up to seven were seen together. Subspecies is *M.o. cyanophris*.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* (M/S) Common migrant. Spring passage from late February (earliest 23 February) to mid-May (latest 17 May), peaking first half of May, with 40-50 on 9 May 1993 and 40+ on 11 May 1991. Autumn passage from early August (earliest 4 August) to early November (latest 10 November), peaking October, with maximum of 50-80 on 30 October 1993. A single in the alfalfa fields on 12 July 1989. Passage less predictable than next species, and appeared to consist of separate waves, rather than a more or less steady stream. Although migration period similar to European Bee-eater *M. apiaster*, only occasionally seen together. On occasions when both species present they rarely consorted but a flock on the dairy farm on 4 May 1991 contained c.30 Blue-cheeked and c.40 European.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (M) Very common migrant in spring from mid-March (earliest 19 March) to late May (latest 19 May), peaking April, with c.80 on 7 April 1989 and 50-100 from 19-25 April 1993. Equally numerous in autumn from late July (earliest 25 July) to late October (latest 29 October), peaking September. Autumn numbers: 100+ on 20 August 1993 and

c.80 on 20 September 1991. Flocks often stayed for a few days with conspicuous night roosts in tall tamarisks, mainly in the alfalfa fields, but also on the dairy farm. Three were ringed on the dairy farm in September 1991.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (M/S) Fairly common late summer visitor and migrant from mid-July (earliest 12 July) to late September (latest 30 September), with one November record (16-18 November 1991) on the dairy farm. Common in the alfalfa fields from mid-July to late August, with nine on 17 August 1989, eight on 25 August 1991 and seven on 5 August 1990, but few in 1993. Loose flocks appeared to be family groups of juveniles with a few adults. Seen throughout, but regular only in the alfalfa fields and on the dairy farm. Five spring records of singles or pairs between late March (earliest 28 March) and early May (latest 1 May).

Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (M/W) Common migrant and rare winter visitor. Spring migration from mid-February (earliest 10 February) to mid-April (latest 16 April), peaking mid-March. Maxima: 20-30 from 15-17 March 1994 and c.15 on 22 March 1989. More numerous in autumn from late July (earliest 27 July) to late October (latest 28 October), peaking September, with 17 on 21 September 1990 and c.12 on 1 September 1989. One winter record of a single on 10 January 1989. Most were in the alfalfa fields, but not uncommon on the dairy farm and the new pivot.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* (M) Uncommon migrant in late March (earliest 30 March), April (seven records) and September (five records). Seen in all habitats, except open desert.

Black-crowned Finch Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* (B/S) Common summer visitor and breeding species in the alfalfa pivots from mid-March (earliest 18 March) to late September (latest 20 September). Absent from Thumamah during 1989 and first appeared in May 1990, possibly as a result of the good winter rains of 1989/90. Numbers increased during the summer to a maximum of 40+ on 15 August 1990. Probably at least ten pairs bred in 1990, but in 1991 the number decreased to about five, with a maximum of c.20 on 11 September 1991. A few pairs bred in the tussock grass in the desert surrounding the dairy farm. The population has remained more or less stable since and has spread to the new pivot.

Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni* (B/I) A rare and irregular breeding species, not identified with certainty until 1993, when 2-3 were in the gazelle enclosure on 26 March. A nest containing four chicks was found there on 27 March 1993: a group including at least five juveniles in May 1993 indicate that more than one pair may have nested in this area. The species was not seen in 1994, although a lark in the new pivot on 14 May was almost certainly this species.

Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cincturus* (B/R) Fairly common breeding resident. Until 1993 groups of 10-15 were frequently found on the gazelle feeding sites during the winter. With the regeneration of natural vegetation in the gazelle enclosure has become much rarer. Infrequently seen during the breeding season, when pairs throughout the desert. Probably 5-10 pairs in the KKWRC and dairy farm vicinity, and perhaps 25+ pairs on the whole estate.

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti* (B/R) Common breeding resident in the escarpment, with probably 25-50 pairs. Flocks of up to 20 form in the morning on the dairy farm during summer or in grassy areas at the base of the escarpment in spring. Occasionally seen in the gazelle enclosure. One of the commonest birds of the escarpment.

Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* (B/R) Breeding resident in small numbers. Number of pairs difficult to estimate as widespread at low density during the breeding season, but probably in excess of ten. Restricted to gravel areas of lowland desert, but frequently feeds in the gazelle enclosure and breeding pens.

Thick-billed Lark *Ramphocoris clotbey* (V) Vagrant. A pair filmed by Tom Tarrant in the escarpment on 20 August 1993, remained for about a week.

Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata* (V) Scarce migrant. Records of 12 on 22 October

1991 and six on 1 October 1993 on the dairy farm, and two on the new pivot on 8 March 1994.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (B/M/S) Abundant migrant and rare breeding species. Spring passage from early February (earliest 1 February) to late March (latest 26 March), peaking in the second half of March, with 200-250 on 19 March 1990. Autumn passage from early September (earliest 9 September) to late October (latest 31 October), peaking mid-September, with 250+ on 14 September 1990. Summer records were of an adult feeding two juveniles on 16 June 1990 (constituting the first breeding record for Saudi Arabia) and records in May and June 1991 (without proof of breeding). Most records were from the alfalfa pivots of the dairy farm and the new pivot, but small flocks were seen in most areas during migration.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* (M) Scarce migrant. Three November records: singles on 14 November 1988 (open desert) and 27 November 1989 (escarpment) and six on 27 November 1989 (dairy farm). Two spring records: one on 6 May 1990 (dairy farm) and 3-4 on 17 June 1994 (new pivot). The species is locally common in agricultural developments in the Riyadh region and it is not impossible that it bred on the dairy farm in 1990 and in the new pivot in 1994; some of the unidentified larks frequently seen in the alfalfa pivots may have been this species.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* (B/R) Abundant resident and one of the commonest birds of Thumamah. Present throughout, but particularly common on the dairy farm, where often 100+ present, and in the alfalfa fields. The number of breeding pairs on the whole estate probably exceeds 100. Various colour morphs were seen, by far the commonest being the typical light brown morph with fairly distinct streaking on the breast. In winter, small groups of very dark birds were sometimes seen in the desert, which were perhaps immigrants. On the dairy farm, a few extremely pale, sandy-coloured birds were usually present around the sludge pond. One was ringed on the dairy farm in September 1991.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis* (V) Rare visitor. A group of 10-15 on 26 January 1994 (new pivot).

Temminck's Horned Lark *Eremophila bilopha* (B?/V) Rare. One in the desert on 12 May 1989.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* (M/S/W) Very common migrant and occasional winter visitor; present in all months. Spring passage from late February (earliest 26 February) to mid-June (latest 21 June), peaking late March-early April and again in first half of May. Flocks of 100+ common with maximum of 300+ on 17 March 1992. Autumn passage from mid-August (earliest 11 August) to mid-October (latest 16 October), peaking late August and first half of September, with 350+ on 10 September 1990. One November record. Occasionally grounded after dust or sand storms, as on 8 May 1989 when 150+ were sitting on roads around the alfalfa fields, too exhausted to fly away from approaching cars. Three July and two winter records: a bird without a tail stayed on the dairy farm from 17 January-27 February 1990 and a juvenile from 18-30 December 1991. On the dairy farm, 179 Sand Martins were ringed in September-October 1991, many of which were heavily oiled.

African Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* (B/R/M) Common resident. A small colony bred in the escarpment, and 5-10 pairs nested in buildings on the estate. Nests in April-May. Largest numbers usually in August-September, when up to 50 on the dairy farm or over the alfalfa fields, some of which were probably migrants. The resident subspecies is *P.f. obsoleta*.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* (M) Fairly common migrant from mid-March (earliest 16 March) to mid-April (latest 20 April), with maximum of 50+ on 6 April 1989. Otherwise rare: a single on 29 January 1989, two on 31 May 1990 and about ten on 6 November 1989. In spring 1991, up to 15 were regularly seen in the escarpment, but they disappeared after 19 April and it is unlikely they bred. Most other records from the alfalfa fields with three from the dairy farm. Possibly more common than records indicate due to close similarity with African Rock Martin.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (M/S/W) Abundant migrant and year-round visitor. Breeding unconfirmed, although birds were seen in a storage barn on the dairy farm in June 1989. Spring

passage from early April to early May, but sometimes quite common in February and March. Scarce in June and July. Autumn passage mainly late August/October, becoming scarce in November and only singles or small flocks during November-January. Largest numbers: 650+ on 10 September 1990 and 400+ on 3 May 1991, but often difficult to count and flocks of several hundred common. In September-October 1991, 46 were ringed on the dairy farm.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (M) Fairly common spring migrant from early February (earliest 6 February) to early April (latest 7 April), with maximum of c.30 on 22 March 1989, on 26 February 1990 and on 3 March 1990. One May record (27 May 1989) of three in the alfalfa fields. Scarce in autumn, with five records between 8 September and 28 October.

House Martin *Delichon urbica* (M/S) Migrant, common only from mid-January (earliest 17 January) to mid-March (latest 28 March), peaking in February, with 175+ on 14 February 1991, 98 on 26 February 1992 and 60+ on 1 February 1991. Records of singles in April (two), May (two), June (one), July (one), August (four) and October (three); one record of two on 23 October 1991 and a small group on 11 November 1993. Early spring migration striking: flocks following the escarpment west would suddenly descend from high in the sky to briefly feed over the alfalfa fields, and then rapidly disappear again. On some clear February days with favourable winds many hundreds, if not thousands, probably passed, usually with Pallid Swifts.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* (M/W) Fairly common winter visitor from late October (earliest 26 October) to April (latest 23 April), with 100+ in the new pivot late March-early April 1994 and c.35 on the dairy farm in January 1992. Usually groups of 2-5, mainly in the alfalfa fields, the new pivot or on the dairy farm, but also in the desert. Scarce autumn migrant, with six records between 28 August and 22 September.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* (M/W) Uncommon migrant, most common in spring 1989, when up to 25 stayed in the alfalfa fields from mid-March to early April. Just three other March records. Two in the alfalfa fields on 11 January 1991. Scarce autumn migrant in September-October (latest 17 October), with five from 4-23 September 1989. Most records were from the alfalfa fields, but a few were at the dairy farm, the new pivot and the gazelle enclosure.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (M/W) Common spring migrant from mid-March (earliest 15 March) to early May (latest 14 May), peaking first half of April, when up to 100+ were regular on the dairy farm and in the new pivot. Scarce autumn migrant in September, when only singles or pairs seen. A group of 30-40 was in the new pivot on 30 October 1993, while a few wintered on the dairy farm from October to March 1990/91 and 1991/92.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* (V) Rare migrant. Six on 16 November 1993 (new pivot).

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (M) Abundant migrant. Spring passage from mid-February (earliest 14 February) to mid-May (latest 20 May), peaking late March-early April when groups of 100-200 regular. More numerous in autumn from mid-July (earliest 10 July) to mid-November (latest 18 November), peaking September, with 250-400 from 7-22 September 1990 and 250+ from 11-14 September 1991. Suspected that between 500-1000 were frequently present in the alfalfa pivots on the dairy farm during September, but area is difficult to count. Spring passage more concentrated and birds rarely lingering, unlike autumn.

Subspecific status of birds difficult to establish in autumn, unlike spring. *M.f. flava* is the commonest subspecies from mid-March to early May and from late August through September (one July record), with 200+ on 26 March 1991 and 150+ on 28 March 1990. *M.f. feldegg* commoner than *M.f. flava* from February to mid-March, peaking mid-March, and the only subspecies regularly seen in July. Also two April and two May records. Highest counts 150+ on 17 March 1992 and c.80 on 19 March 1991. *M.f. thunbergi* third commonest and also the latest in spring, with most in April and early May (c.50 on 7 April 1990 and twice a flock of c.30 in late April) and only one September record. *M.f. lutea* uncommon, usually single or a few males in flocks of *M.f. flava*, maximum c.5 on 23 April 1990. *M.f. beema* rare, with two early April records

and possibly one in August. Adult males of indeterminate subspecies frequently observed, some closely resembling *M.f. cinereocapilla*. In autumn 1991 19 were ringed on the dairy farm.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (M/W) Scarce migrant and rare winter visitor from early September (earliest 2 September) to February (latest 14 February). No records until autumn 1990. One juvenile was ringed in September 1991 and two on 3 October 1991; several records of adults in December-February. Maximum: three on 11 September 1991. One record was from the alfalfa fields, but all others were at the dairy farm.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* (M/W) Uncommon migrant. Spring passage in February-March, autumn passage from mid-August (earliest 12 August) to late October (latest 24 October). One winter record of a single on 8 January 1992 on the dairy farm. Usually one or two. The only group was 10-15 on the dairy farm on 4 September 1991. Most records from the dairy farm, but also regular in the alfalfa fields. Three ringed on the dairy farm in September-October 1991.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* (M/W) Very common migrant and winter visitor from mid-October (earliest 11 October) to late March (latest 23 March). Numbers fairly stable November-January when usually 50-125 present on the dairy farm, with 225+ on 6 November 1989. Slightly more common February-March, when numbers increasing to 150-200. One April (18 April 1991) and one May record (21 May 1989) of singles on the dairy farm. Two August and one September record of juveniles may have related to juvenile Citrine Wagtail. Wintered on the dairy farm, but frequent in the alfalfa fields and elsewhere on migration (October-November and February-March). Only birds of, or strongly resembling, nominate *M.a. alba* were observed.

White-cheeked Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys* (B?/R) Scarce resident. Regularly observed February-April 1989 and June-October 1990, with records in September 1989, March 1990 and December 1990, always in the village or the alfalfa fields. Not observed in 1991 or 1992. Almost certainly bred in 1990.

Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthopygos* (I) A rare visitor to the village and the alfalfa fields, with two records in autumn 1989 and one in May 1991. Either it breeds in very small numbers elsewhere on the estate, as not uncommon around Riyadh, or records represent dispersal from neighbouring areas.

Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus* (M) Scarce and irregular migrant. Prior to 1993, four late autumn records in the village between 30 October and 16 December, with a maximum of four on 30 October 1989. In spring 1993 three records between 28 February and 2 April, with 5-6 on the dairy farm, and a small invasion between 28 November and 3 December, when up to 40 were in fruiting *Zizyphus* bushes in the escarpment.

Rufous Bush Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* (B/S/M) Fairly common summer visitor and breeding species in the alfalfa fields from late March (earliest 24 March) to mid-September (latest 14 September). A single was ringed on the dairy farm on 19 September 1991, so some passage likely as species does not breed there. Four or five pairs bred each year. Rarely seen away from tamarisk windbreaks.

Black Bush Robin *Cercotrichas podobe* (B/R) Fairly common summer visitor and breeding species in the alfalfa fields: some birds being resident. Regularly observed between early March and mid-September, but only one or two winter. About five pairs bred. Nest with eggs found in date palm in April 1989. Like previous species, almost entirely confined to alfalfa fields.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (M) Scarce migrant. Five records, all in September. Four were in 1991, when three were ringed on the dairy farm and one was found dead near the alfalfa fields. The other was in late September 1992.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* (M) Rare migrant. Three April (12 April 1994 escarpment, 19 April 1991 and 26 April 1993 alfalfa fields) and one autumn record of the eastern

subspecies *L.m. hafizi* ringed on the dairy farm on 12 September 1991.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* (M/W) Uncommon/common migrant and winter visitor from mid-August (earliest 18 August) to late March (latest 25 March), with records in August-September. Usually singles, or two-three together and a small invasion in 1994, when 20-30 on 22 January (dairy farm) and 30 in February-early March in the new pivot. Subspecific status unclear, but four records of adult male *L.s. magna* (two in March and two in September) and three of adult males with white in the breast – either *L.s. cyanecula* or *L.s. volgae*. Five were ringed in September 1991, including two *L.s. magna*.

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* (M) Uncommon migrant. At least 15 in spring between 31 March and 25 April and two autumn records on 30 August and 20 September, were mostly singles but occasionally two or three. Most records were in the village or alfalfa fields, but two on the dairy farm, including one mist-netted on 20 September 1991.

Eversmann's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythronotus* (V) Rare winter visitor. A male in the alfalfa fields from 8 December 1990-11 January 1991 was confirmed by D. James. A new species for the Riyadh area.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (V) Rare winter visitor. A male of the subspecies *P.o. phoenicuroides* in alfalfa fields on 11 December 1990.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (M/W) Fairly common spring migrant in the alfalfa fields from mid-March (earliest 10 March) to mid-May (latest 19 May). Inclement weather led to noticeable falls of this species, with c.10 on 24 April 1989, nine on 31 March 1989 and eight on 9 May 1991. An adult male on 13 December 1990 coincided with records of Black and Eversmann's Redstart. Subspecies *P.p. samamisicus* uncommon in spring, with seven records in March (earliest 7 March) and a maximum of five on 13 March 1991 – earlier in spring than *P.p. phoenicurus*. One record of two *P.p. samamisicus* on 28 September 1990 was the only autumn record of any redstart except for an unidentified *Phoenicurus* sp. on 13 November 1988.

Blackstart *Cercomela melanura* (B/R) Fairly common breeding resident at the base of the escarpment, occasionally elsewhere. At least five pairs found in a c.3 km stretch of escarpment; probably 25+ pairs on the estate.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* (M) Uncommon migrant. Spring passage from late March (earliest 23 March) to late May (latest 21 May), with five on 4 May 1991 on the dairy farm. Scarce in autumn, with five records between 7 August and 23 September. Most in the alfalfa fields, but occasionally on the dairy farm or the new pivot.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (M/W) Common migrant and uncommon winter visitor. Spring passage from late February to early April (latest 8 April), with c.25 on 22 March 1989 and 19 on 7 March 1990. Autumn passage from mid-August (earliest 13 August) and peaking in September, with most in early September e.g. 14 on 6 September 1991. Generally scarce November-January, but usually 1-3 pairs in the alfalfa fields and a few on the dairy farm. Subspecific identity difficult to establish. *S.t. maura* regular in small numbers, particularly in September, e.g. four on 14 September 1990, and in March.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (M/W) Common migrant and regular winter visitor. Spring passage mainly from early February to mid-March, with 30+ on 4 March 1992 (dairy farm), 16 on 19 March 1991 (dairy farm) and 15 on 7 March 1990 (alfalfa fields). Numbers rapidly decreasing from late March; only six April-May (latest 11 May) and one June record (16 June 1990). Autumn passage from late July (earliest 24 July), peaking late August and first half of September, with fewer in October and November. Highest autumn counts 17+ on 14 September 1990 and 16+ on 30 August 1989. Uncommon to scarce December-January, when only a handful present. Most records were from the dairy farm, the alfalfa fields and the new pivot, but regular in the gazelle enclosure and breeding pens.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (M) Fairly common spring migrant from early March (earliest 4 March) to early May (latest 11 May), peaking mid-March to early April. An unusually large influx occurred from 5-17 March 1994, when 50-100 in new pivot, but spring maxima usually 10-15. Much less common in autumn, with eight records between 1-17 September, usually of singles. Equally common on the dairy farm, the alfalfa fields and the new pivot.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (M) Common migrant. Spring passage from mid-February (earliest 10 February) to mid-April, after which numbers rapidly decreased. Latest spring record 2 May. Highest numbers in first half of March, when sometimes one of the commonest birds in the alfalfa fields, e.g. 30 on 13 March 1992 and 26 on 7 March 1990. Less numerous in autumn from late August (earliest 28 August) to mid-November (latest 12 November), commonest second half of September, with eight on 27 September 1990. One summer record of a singleton 22 July 1993. Commoner in the alfalfa fields than on the dairy farm. Two records of white-throated form *vittata* in March 1991 and one in April 1993.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (M) Uncommon migrant, with most in late February (earliest 26 February) and March (latest 28 March), with 10-20 on 5 March 1994 (new pivot) and 10-15 on 23 March 1989 (alfalfa fields). One on 13 May 1990. Much less common in autumn when identification difficult, but probably regular in September in very small numbers. Adult males in spring all of eastern subspecies *O.h. melanoleuca*, either with or without black throat.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (M/W) Fairly common migrant and winter visitor from late September (earliest 27 September) to early March (latest 7 March), with one on 23 August 1991 and 1 April 1989. Most in November-January, with maximum of ten on the dairy farm on 8 January 1992. Territories not as strictly defined as those of wintering Mourning Wheatear *O. lugens*. Probably 25-50 on estate in most winters: much less common during 1993/94.

Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii* (V) Rare winter visitor. A female on the dairy farm on 22 December 1989 and possibly the same on 10 February 1990. In March-April 1993 a female probably of this species was on the dairy farm.

Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthoprymna* (M/W) Scarce migrant and winter visitor (always singles) from late September (earliest 27 September) to mid-March (latest 17 March). Sometimes establishes territories for several weeks, e.g. 7-27 December 1989 on the dairy farm. Most records from the latter area.

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens* (M/W) Fairly common winter visitor from late September (earliest 27 September) to late February (latest 26 February); one with an injured foot stayed at KKWRC headquarters from 16 February-3 April 1989. Almost upon arrival birds establish territories, where they often remain for weeks or months. Nearly as common as Desert Wheatear, but prefers man-made vantage points e.g. buildings and fences in open terrain. Probably 25-50 wintering on entire estate. No sexual dimorphism apparent, so all presumably *O.l. lugens* or *O.l. persica*.

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* (B/R) Scarce visitor: almost certainly breeding. Irregularly observed, but four records in summer 1990 (when juvenile male with adult seen) on the dairy farm and several records of at least one in July and August 1993 at the escarpment. Presumably one pair bred in 1990 and 1993. Single records from January, February, April and November, with two in September and a pair at gazelle enclosure in November-December 1993.

White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* (B/R) Fairly common breeding resident at the base of the escarpment – probably 25 pairs on the estate. Numbers appear to be decreasing, with fewer on the escarpment since 1990. A typical bird of more rocky areas, but nevertheless regular on the dairy farm, especially juveniles, in summer and autumn.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* (M) Scarce in spring from mid-March (earliest 13 March) to late April (latest 24 April), always singles. No autumn records.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* (M) Scarce migrant, with two records in February-March and a male in late September 1993. A female stayed at KKWRC Headquarters from 22 February-17 March 1990, spending much of its time inside buildings, while another was on the entrance building on 6 March 1992.

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (V) Rare winter visitor. Two records of male *T.r. atrogularis* in January 1991, possibly involving the same individual: on the dairy farm 12-16 January and in the alfalfa fields on 30 January.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* (W) Scarce winter visitor, although possibly more common than records indicate as difficult to observe. A single from 27 November-14 December 1989 on the dairy farm, three from 5-20 March 1990 in the alfalfa fields and a single in the village on 28 January 1992. Several records of unidentified thrushes December-March probably this species.

Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta* (B/R) Rare resident in wadis and canyons of the escarpment, but also recorded on the high scree slopes. Seldom seen, and total number of breeding pairs probably not more than 5-10.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (M) Scarce spring migrant. Four records, all singles: three in the alfalfa fields between 1 April and 17 May 1989 and one in the new pivot on 14 May 1994.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (V) Rare migrant. One ringed and photographed on the dairy farm by P. Symens on 24 October 1991 was the first record for Saudi Arabia.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* (M) Scarce migrant, but probably more common than records indicate. Two ringed on the dairy farm in September 1991, but several records of *Acrocephalus* in the alfalfa fields, e.g. 10+ on 4 May 1991, almost certainly this species.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (M) Probably fairly common migrant, but few certain records. Four were ringed on the dairy farm in September-October 1991 (latest 24 October). Flocks of small *Acrocephalus* sp. common on the dairy farm late July-late August, with 50+ (possibly 100+) on 29 August 1990 and 40+ on 11 August 1989, when smaller numbers regular in the alfalfa fields. Unidentified *Acrocephalus* sp. less common in spring, mainly May, with rarely more than five. Most are probably Reed Warbler.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (M) Fairly common migrant. Spring passage in small numbers from mid-April (earliest 16 April) to mid-May (latest 11 May), with 10-20 on 25-26 April 1993 (alfalfa fields). Autumn passage from late July (earliest 24 July) to late October (latest 24 October), peaking in August, with 20+ on 20 August 1993. Equally common in tamarisks lining the alfalfa fields as on the dairy farm. Six were ringed on the dairy farm in September 1991, all of the eastern subspecies *A.a. zarudnyi*.

Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus (arundinaceus) griseldis* (M) First certain record was one ringed on the dairy farm on 4 September 1991 and at least five in the alfalfa fields on 25 August 1991. In retrospect had probably occurred frequently in alfalfa fields in first half of May and July-August. In 1993 and 1994 very common migrant in alfalfa fields: hundreds (probably 1000+) in *Casuarinas* on 16 August 1993 when the distinctive 'kreeking' or Corncrake-like *Crex crex* call could be heard at some distance. Still hundreds on 20 August 1993. Similar numbers in 1994: first appeared 3 August, heavy fall on 20 August with 600+ in the alfalfa fields, but a total of 1000-2000 estimated. Great Reed Warbler and smaller *Acrocephalus* were present in smaller numbers for comparison. Last on 28 August. Thumamah may harbour a significant percentage of the total world population of this species during a fall. It was previously recorded as common at Riyadh in autumn 1975 (Jennings 1976).

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* (B/S/M) Fairly common summer visitor and breeding species in the alfalfa fields from late March (earliest 24 March) to mid-September (latest 12

September). Probably four or five pairs bred in 1991. Larger numbers (tens) in late August 1993 were presumably migrants. Uncommon away from the alfalfa fields, but one ringed on 12 September 1991 on the dairy farm and frequent at the base of the escarpment in spring migration.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (V) Rare migrant. One from 9-11 May 1991 in the alfalfa fields, but a group of five warblers on 5 September 1990 were almost certainly this species.

Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida* (M) Uncommon migrant. Spring passage from late March (earliest 23 March) to early May (latest 7 May), all singles except 2-3 on 29 April 1990 near the base of the escarpment. Four autumn records between 20 August and 3 September, with c.25 in a single bush on the dairy farm on 25 August 1990. Seen in all vegetated areas.

Ménétries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea* (W/M) Scarce migrant and winter visitor. Four records between 20 January and 10 April, including two in alfalfa from 25 March-10 April 1989.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* (W) Uncommon winter visitor between late October (earliest 29 October) and mid-February (latest 16 February), occasionally later e.g. 2 April 1989 and regularly March-April 1993. Usually singles, although sometimes two together. Seen in all suitable habitats, most often in low shrubs around human habitation, along the base of the escarpment or in the gazelle enclosure. Frequently associated with Mourning Wheatear.

Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* (M) Scarce migrant. A female from 24 March-4 April 1989 in the alfalfa fields, and a female there on 3 September 1989. On 5 September 1989 three or four were seen at the base of the escarpment.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* (M) Scarce migrant. Five records in April (earliest 21 April) and May (latest 4 May) and three in September, one on 5 September 1989, one ringed on the dairy farm on 19 September 1991 and eight at the foot of the escarpment in late September 1993.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca curruca* (M) Spring migrant in variable numbers. Very common in the alfalfa fields in spring 1989 and 1993, when 25+ were present in late March and early April and last were seen on 3 May. Much smaller numbers in February-April in other springs. No autumn records. Most were in dense tamarisk windbreaks in the alfalfa fields.

Desert Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia (curruca) minula* (W) Winter visitor in small numbers from early November (earliest 6 November) to late March (latest 24 March). Behaviour, habitat and call quite different from *S. c. curruca*, preferring acacia trees in open terrain, wadis and the relatively low tamarisk windbreak around the gazelle breeding pens. Most records were of singles.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* (M) Fairly common migrant. Spring passage from mid-March (earliest 10 March) to mid-May (latest 19 May), peaks of up to ten in late April and early May. One on 2 June 1989 in the alfalfa fields. Autumn passage from mid-August (earliest 13 August) to late September (latest 27 September), peaking in early September, with five on 1 September 1989 (alfalfa fields) and 3 September 1991 (escarpment).

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* (M) Scarce migrant. Six autumn records of singles between 22 August and 19 September, two of which were ringed on the dairy farm in September 1991.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (M/W) Scarce migrant. Five records between late March and mid-May, most in the alfalfa fields. Three ringed on the dairy farm in September 1991. Two winter records: a male in the village on 28 December 1990 and a female at KKWRC headquarters on 7 November 1991.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (M/W) Very common migrant and uncommon winter visitor from late August (earliest 24 August) to May (latest 21 May), with one June record (17 June 1990). Usually commonest in March and early April, when frequently 30-50 in the alfalfa fields: large falls occasional at other times e.g. 50+ on 8 November 1991 on the dairy farm and 50+ on 9

May 1991 in the alfalfa fields. November-February numbers in the alfalfa fields usually 5-10. Plumage extremely variable and identification not always easy: probably different populations involved. Most were in the alfalfa fields, but not uncommon in reedbeds on the dairy farm. Three ringed there on 24 October 1991.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (M) Fairly common migrant. Spring passage from late February (earliest 26 February) to late May (latest 22 May), peaking second half of April after bulk of Chiffchaff passage. Maxima: 20+ on 24 April 1989 and c.20 on 29 April 1990. Less numerous in autumn from late August (earliest 31 August) to September (latest 27 September). Three ringed on the dairy farm in September 1991.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* (M) Common migrant. Spring passage from mid-March (earliest 17 March) to mid-June (latest 18 June), peaking late April and May. Spring maxima: 18 on 29 April 1990 and 14 on 4 May 1991. Autumn passage from mid-August (earliest 16 August) to early October, with a very late record on 21 October 1989 and 15 on 6 September 1991, but 2-5 more usual.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* (V) Rare winter visitor. A single in the alfalfa fields on 20 January 1990.

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata* (V) Rare migrant. An adult male in the alfalfa fields on 6 April 1989.

Arabian Babbler *Turdoides squamiceps* (B/R) Uncommon breeding resident in the escarpment. A flock of 10-15 regularly seen in the main wadi of the escarpment, but possibly occurrs in other areas. Probably not more than 5-10 pairs. Twice recorded in the gazelle breeding pens.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* (M) Uncommon but regular migrant. In spring, mostly singles between 25 April and 20 May, although 4-5 in first half of May 1993. More common in autumn when up to 12 from late August (earliest 23 August) to late September (latest 23 September), with one October record (16 October 1989). Prefers *Casuarina* trees. Almost all records were from the alfalfa fields.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (M/W) Common migrant and scarce winter visitor. Autumn passage late August (earliest 30 August) to November, commonest September but no clear peak. Three mid-winter records: singles in December, January and February. Spring passage from early March (earliest 7 March) to late May (latest 31 May), peaking late March-April. Maxima: c.15 on 21 April 1989 (alfalfa fields), nine on 24 March 1991 (escarpment) and six on 19 April 1991 (different locations). Bulk of spring passage earlier and most of autumn passage later than Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio*. Subspecific differentiation not usually easy, but obvious *L.i. isabellinus* and *L.i. phoenicuroides* observed in small numbers in spring and autumn, while most birds were intermediates, presumably *L.i. speculigerus*. Three were ringed on the dairy farm in September 1991 and one on 24 October 1991.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* (M) Common migrant. Spring passage from mid-April (earliest 16 April) to early June (latest 5 June), peaking late April-early May. Maxima: 23 on 8 May 1991 (dairy farm), 19 on 9 May 1991 (alfalfa fields) and c.15 on 29 April 1990 (escarpment). Autumn passage more protracted, with birds often lingering, from second half of August (earliest 18 August) to early October (latest 11 October), peaking first half of September. Maxima: 16 on 6 September 1990, 15 on 3 September 1991 and 7 September 1990. Equally common on the dairy farm and in the alfalfa fields, but lingering longer in the alfalfa fields. Two were ringed on the dairy farm in September 1991 and one on 2 October 1991.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (M) Fairly common migrant. Spring passage from late April (earliest 23 April) to late May (latest 19 May), when maximum of four on 8 May 1991 (dairy farm). More numerous in autumn from mid-August (earliest 15 August) to late September (latest 28 September). Autumn maxima: 18 on 29 August 1990, eight on 26 August 1990 and

seven on 25 August 1991. Equally common on the dairy farm and in the alfalfa fields.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* (M/W) Fairly common migrant and uncommon winter visitor, usually in singles. Autumn passage from early August (earliest 9 August) to November. Relatively few records December-February. Spring passage mainly in March, with one April record (18 April 1989). Maximum: 5-6 on 15 September 1990. No signs of breeding. Only *L.e. pallidirostris* was recognised (several times in winter); the majority were difficult to identify to subspecies, but at least two, and probably three, taxa were involved.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (M) Rather uncommon migrant from mid-February (earliest 14 February) to mid-May (latest 20 May), peaking March, and from mid-August (earliest 16 August) to mid-September (latest 18 September), peaking first half of September. Maxima: c.5 in April 1994, four on 24 March 1991 and 5 September 1990. Most were in the alfalfa fields.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* (M/S) Uncommon but regular migrant. Spring passage from late March (earliest 28 March) to early May (latest 11 May). Autumn passage in September. A female stayed in the alfalfa fields from 12 July-2 September 1989. Usually singles, although occasionally up to three. Most were in the alfalfa fields.

Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis* (B/R) Common, sometimes abundant, year-round visitor. Bred in the escarpment (probably 10+ pairs), and occasionally elsewhere (e.g. in a shed in the gazelle enclosure). Commonest in the alfalfa pivots of the dairy farm, where concentrations of 250+ not uncommon in mid-summer. Less common in winter, but still usually 25+ there. New-born gazelle, and nests and young of waterbirds in the sludge pond were predated.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (W) Uncommon winter visitor from late November (earliest 17 November) to mid-February (latest 12 February), mainly on the dairy farm, although a few records from the gazelle enclosure. Maxima: 26 on 23 December 1988 (gazelle enclosure) and 15 on 12 January 1991 (dairy farm), while eight stayed on the diary farm from 1 December 1989-14 January 1990.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* (M) Scarce early autumn migrant. Two juveniles were observed in the alfalfa fields on 13 August 1989 and a single juvenile feeding on ripe dates from 11-14 September 1989. Another two juveniles were on the dairy farm 20-22 August 1990, of which one remained until 31st, while between 19-21 August 1993 as many as six juveniles in the alfalfa fields in the new pivot.

Common Mynah *Acridotheres tristis* (B/R) One pair bred near the village in 1991 and 1992. Maximum: four on 13 March 1992.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (B/R) Abundant breeding resident, with flocks of hundreds occasionally on the dairy farm or in the alfalfa fields. Probably 150+ breeding pairs.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* (I) Irregular visitor to the dairy farm. Two males on 29 October 1988 and a single male ringed there on 23 September 1991. An influx in early spring 1992 resulted in 30-35 on 25 January 1992 and a flock of 250-300 on 15 February 1992. Only singles in 1993 and 1994.

Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachydactyla* (I) Rare and irregular visitor. The first record was of a single on the dairy farm on 22 October 1991. Conforming to its nomadic character the species suddenly appeared in numbers in the summer of 1993, when 10-20 were seen in the escarpment on 4 July. On 9 July there were 70-100 around the dairy farm; these lingered until 16 August when 10-12 were observed.

Avadavat *Amandava amandava* (V) Rare visitor. Two on the dairy farm on 24 October 1991.

Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica* (B/R) Resident and presumed breeding species, but no

proof of breeding. Numbers fluctuated, with many records from October 1988-September 1990, but only four subsequently. Most were in spring and autumn when small flocks of 2-6 commonly observed. Scarce in winter, when only occasionally observed in relatively large flocks. Maxima: c.25 on 30 March 1989, 20 January 1990 and 13 March 1990. Number of breeding pairs in 1989 and 1990 estimated at not more than five. Most records were from the alfalfa fields, although regularly present in the gazelle breeding pens.

Siskin *Carduelis spinus* (W) Scarce winter visitor. A small influx from 16 November-16 December 1990, with maximum of 12 near the village and 11 on the dairy farm. A second influx occurred in November 1993 with 30-40 birds on 11 November in the new pivot. The species was also recorded in spring 1994: 15 in the new pivot on 9 March and six there on 30 March.

Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta* (B?/R) This species first appeared in the Riyadh region in 1989/1990 (*The Phoenix* 8:9). It was not observed at Thumamah until 27 March 1993, when a pair was near the gazelle breeding pens. Pairs were observed on 30 March, 8 May, 10 May and 4 July, but these were possibly the same two. On 19 December there were 10-15 around the centre, and on 6 January 1994 six were on the dairy farm. A pair reappeared in the *Casuarinas* surrounding the alfalfa fields in May 1994. This species appears to be increasing both its winter and breeding ranges in the Arabian Peninsula (*The Phoenix* 9:27).

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* (B/R) Uncommon/common resident in variable numbers. During the very dry winter of 1988/89 regularly observed in the gazelle breeding pens, with a maximum of 36 on 10 January 1989. Between April 1989 and April 1990 only one record of a pair on 23 September 1989. The winter of 1989/90 brought good rains, and the species was common from May 1990 onwards, with highest counts of 80+ on 20 August 1990 and 75+ from 10-15 September 1990. These flocks were in the alfalfa pivots on the dairy farm, and appeared to arrive from the escarpment. Slightly less common in 1991, but still 50+ in the escarpment on 12 July 1991. In wet winters the birds probably dispersed throughout the desert, and were not reliant on artificial water supplies. The species presumably bred on the estate in 1990 and 1991, and judging by the size of the flocks at least 10-20 pairs were involved.

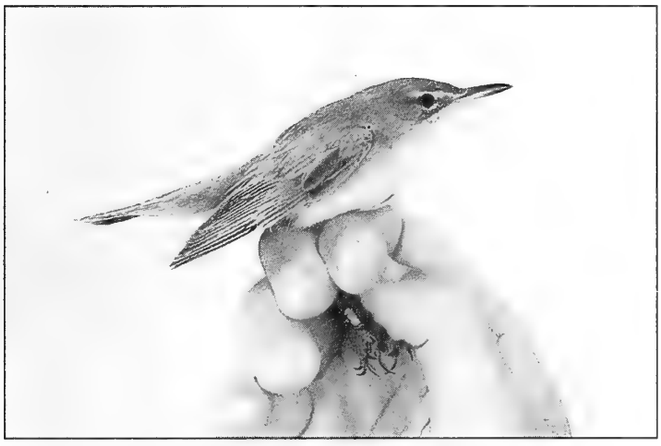


Plate 5. Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis*, Thumamah (Saudi Arabia), autumn 1991. (*Frank Rietkerk*)

Plate 6. Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, Thumamah dairy farm (Saudi Arabia), autumn 1991. (*Frank Rietkerk*)

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* (M/S) Uncommon autumn migrant from late August (earliest 29 August) to late October (latest 24 October), usually in very small numbers. One summer record of an adult male on 2 June 1990. Most records were from the dairy farm, but also seen in the alfalfa fields. Relatively large numbers in autumn 1991, when eight were ringed. A new species for the Riyadh region.

House Bunting *Emberiza striolata* (B/S) Rare breeding species, with ten records between early June and mid-November, including a male and female feeding a young bird on 7 June 1990 at the base of the escarpment. Most records from the dairy farm in July and September, usually solitary but occasionally two or three. Very shy and difficult to observe. All birds seen well were *E.s. striolata*. Probably one or two pairs bred along the escarpment every year.

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea* (V) Rare migrant, with 1-2 in the alfalfa fields on 12 September 1990, one on the dairy farm on 12 April 1994, and a probable on the dairy farm on 9 September 1990. The only bird seen well was of the race *E.c. semenowi*. These are the first records for the Riyadh area.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* (M) Fairly common migrant. Twelve spring records between 31 March and 10 May, with 10-20 on 16 April 1993 on the dairy farm. More numerous in autumn from late August (earliest 31 August) to early October (latest 6 October), although not recorded in autumn 1993. Highest autumn count: 21 on 27 September 1990. Majority of records involved 2-7. Equally common on the dairy farm and in the alfalfa fields, and occasionally elsewhere. Two were ringed on the dairy farm in September 1991.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (M) Scarce autumn migrant. Six records between 21 August and 14 September, all of female or juveniles, with five from 6-9 September 1990 in the alfalfa fields. Three records from the dairy farm.

Red-headed Bunting *E. bruniceps*, which has very similar female and juvenile plumages, was not eliminated, but this species is unlikely to occur in such numbers in central Saudi Arabia.

Probables

A number of species are omitted from the list as identification was not definite: Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* on 16 May 1989, Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Small Skylark *Alauda gulgula* in March 1992 and 1994, Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*, Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* in April 1993, Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* in August 1993, Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* in March 1992 and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*. All could be expected: Corn Bunting had been observed at Thumamah prior to 1988.

RESULTS

A total of 227 species was recorded on the Thumamah Estate between October 1988 and May 1994: 33 bred at least once, 12 possibly bred, 29 were resident, 128 migrants, 61 winter visitors, 19 summer visitors, one possibly a summer visitor, six irregular visitors and 46 were seen only once or twice. This list compares well with an annotated checklist of the Riyadh area (Stagg 1987), with a few minor differences reflecting the rapidly changing habitats of the region. It is also remarkably similar to a checklist of the Al Jawf region, northern Saudi Arabia (Green 1984). A few species were notable for their absence at Thumamah e.g. sandgrouse *Pterocles* species. and Fan-tailed Raven *Corvus rhipidurus*.

Seven globally-threatened species (Ferruginous Duck, Spotted Eagle, Black Vulture, Imperial Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Corncrake and Sociable Plover) were recorded on the estate (Collar & Andrew 1988, Collar *et al.* 1994). Black Vulture had not been recorded in the Central Province of Saudi Arabia for nearly a decade.

Comparison with a 1984-1985 survey

In October 1984 and April 1985 field surveys were carried out at Thumamah by seven scientists from the Universities of Essen and Berlin for the Riyadh Development Authority (RDA 1985). The report includes a checklist of all species recorded on the estate during the two surveys. Considering the limited time they spent at Thumamah, it is interesting that the participating ornithologist(s) recorded the majority of species described in this paper. Most of the waterbirds and shorebirds were not recorded, presumably because the sludge pond on the dairy farm had not yet developed, and some of the typical winter visitors were also absent.

Several species were seen in October 1984 and April 1985 which were not seen during 1988-1994. RDA (1985) includes a few raptors which have subsequently become very rare in the Riyadh region, e.g. Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*, Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*, Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* and Saker Falcon *F. cherrug*, although these species were only observed in very small numbers. Crowned Sandgrouse *Pterocles coronatus* was also recorded in 1984-85. Other uncommon species listed in the RDA (1985) checklist,

which could conceivably occur again are Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, Shikra *Accipiter badius*, Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*, Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*, Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*, Yellow-throated Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis*, Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia* and Corn Bunting.

The RDA (1985) list also includes a few unusual species, some of which are considered unlikely to occur in the area, e.g. Singing Bush Lark *Mirafra cantillans*, Arabian Warbler *Sylvia leucomelaena* and Tristram's Grackle *Onychognathus tristramii*. Records of Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger*, Güldenstadt's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogaster*, Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus* (reported as common) and African Rock Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi* (the local form of House Bunting is extremely similar to this species) must surely have been misidentifications.

The list of breeding species recorded in 1984-1985 includes Long-legged Buzzard, Barbary Falcon, Sand Partridge, Rock Dove, Collared Dove, Namaqua Dove, Eagle Owl, Pallid Swift, Little Green Bee-eater, Desert Lark, Bar-tailed Desert Lark, Hoopoe Lark, Crested Lark, African Rock Martin, Black Bush Robin, Blackstart, Hooded Wheatear, White-crowned Black Wheatear, Scrub Warbler, Arabian Babbler, House Sparrow and Brown-necked Raven. The following are also listed as potential breeding species: Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Lesser Kestrel, Turtle Dove (erroneously listed as Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*), Barn Owl, Little Owl, Arabian Warbler, Great Grey Shrike, Trumpeter Finch, House Bunting, African Rock Bunting (see above).

The breeding avifauna was similar to that in 1988-1994. Barbary Falcon has probably disappeared as a breeding species, but spring records in 1994 indicate that it may still breed in the vicinity. Arabian Warbler and African Rock Bunting do not appear to occur in central Saudi Arabia, whilst it is unclear why Sparrowhawk is listed as a potential breeding species. The status of Little Owl is uncertain – it was seen a few times in 1988 and may still occur. House Bunting now breeds, and Trumpeter Finch probably does so. New breeding species consist of water-associated species (Moorhen, Black-winged Stilt and Kentish Plover), nomads (Cream-coloured Courser and Dunn's Lark), species which are adapting to alfalfa fields and tamarisk windbreaks (Black-crowned Finch Lark, Short-toed Lark, Rufous Bush Robin and Olivaceous Warbler), and introductions (Palm Dove, Common Mynah and Indian Silverbill).

House Martin and Common Tern migration

The strong migration of House Martins in January and February is noteworthy. Cramp (1988) describes it as a broad-front migrant across the Arabian Peninsula as with Swallow, which leaves Africa in March. In the Riyadh area the first migrants appear in January, with most occurring in February in compact flocks, unlike the rather loose groups of Swallow. At Thumamah, House Martins occurred most regularly along or over the escarpment, and only in very small numbers elsewhere over the estate.

The presence of so many Common Terns (and also Little Terns) in late spring and early summer was interesting. It is considered that these were one- and two-year old birds which were moving north for the first time, probably from the Indian Ocean, but are still too young to breed (as described in Cramp 1985).

Future work

In order to further clarify the status (and identity) of many of the migratory passerines a ringing programme should be initiated. A survey of the more remote parts of the estate may clarify the status of (possible) breeding species such as Egyptian Vulture, Long-legged Buzzard, Dunn's Lark, Temminck's Horned Lark, Yellow-vented Bulbul, Hooded Wheatear and Trumpeter Finch. A study of the migration along the Buwayb Escarpment which appears to have a directional function in the migration of raptors, swifts and House Martin is required.

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Notes on the coastal birds of Libya, July 1993

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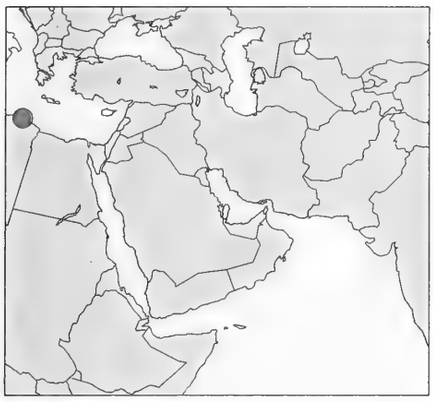

In July 1993, a joint Dutch/Libyan team visited the Libyan coast with the principal aim of establishing whether Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* still bred in Libya. Other observations included the first reported breeding of six species: Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* and Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis*, the first observation of Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* and breeding range extensions for several other species.

BETWEEN 17 and 30 July 1993, a field trip covering much of the Libyan coast (Figure 1), was conducted by the authors. This was a joint project of the Foundation Working Group, International Wader and Waterfowl Research (WIWO) and the Marine Biology Research Centre, Tajura, Libya. The main aim was to rediscover the breeding site(s) of Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*. The entire Mediterranean population of this species was believed to be breeding in Libya but the only estimate of the number of breeders ('2000 birds' in the Gulf of Surt) was made in 1937 (Moltoni 1938). Details of the two breeding colonies of Lesser Crested Tern found in 1993 have already been published (Meininger *et al.* 1994a). A general account of the expedition and a complete list of bird observations is given in the expedition report (Meininger *et al.* 1994b). This paper presents the most notable observations made during the trip with reference to Bundy (1976).

METHODS

Systematic notes were made of all birds observed. Unless stated otherwise all dates refer to 1993. Some localities are shown in Figure 1; a gazetteer (Appendix) contains all of the localities mentioned in the text with their geographical coordinates.

It should be realised that many areas were only covered from a moving car; only a few sites (mainly wetlands) received more attention. When crossing desert areas the activity of birds in the early morning and late afternoon was striking. Their apparent absence during the hot hours did not necessarily represent a real lack of birds.

RESULTS

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* On 21 July, 11 (two adults and nine juveniles) were fishing in Ayn al Ghazalah Bay, and a flock of 15 (seven adults and eight juveniles) were resting on the shore of Geziret al Elba. One adult was off Al Chadrun on 23 July. On 26 July, two adults and three juveniles were on Geziret Garah.

No evidence of breeding was found on any of the islands visited. However, in two places, fishermen who we interviewed accurately described nests and chicks of Shag. In 'late winter/early spring' (February-March) fishermen visit Geziret Bardaa to collect the young, which reputedly make 'excellent eating'. At least some tens of chicks were said to be collected every year. Between Sawani al Mallahah and the border with Egypt an estimated 20 pairs are reputed to breed. Here Shags breed in single pairs on high sandstone cliffs to which access is almost impossible.

This is the first confirmation of the breeding of Shag in Libya. Bundy (1976) mentioned that this species has been observed in breeding habitat from Apollonia [=Susah] to Darnah, and on small islets off Zuwaytinah in the Gulf of Surt. Fledged juveniles were seen at some of the islets in late August by Moltoni (1937). According to Bundy (1976) individuals have been recorded at Tubruq in February-April. However, Rowntree (1943), quoted as one of the sources for these observations by Bundy (1976), mentions only Cormorants *P. carbo*.

The Mediterranean subspecies of Shag *P. a. desmarestii* breeds principally in the Balearics, on Corsica, Sardinia and along the Croatian coast. It also breeds in small numbers along the Mediterranean coasts of north-west Africa, Turkey, Cyprus and probably Egypt (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 34:33), as well as in the Aegean and Black Seas. The total number of breeding pairs in the Mediterranean is estimated at c. 7000 (Zotier *et al.* 1992).

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* The wing of a swan shot near Bumbah measured 54 cm (maximum chord) and could have belonged to either Mute or Whooper Swan *C. cygnus*. Fishermen and hunters at Ayn Zayanah Lagoon reported that up to a hundred swans were present here during winter 1992/93. They arrived in flocks of 20-40 birds and some were shot. They had never seen swans before, but when shown a field guide, they pointed to Mute Swan without hesitation. Personnel at the oil complex at Zuwaytinah also reported having seen swans in recent winters.

The following information on swans in Greece lends support to the credibility of an influx into Libya in winter 1992/93. In late December 1992 and early January 1993, two successive cold fronts swept across the Balkans, Turkey and the eastern Mediterranean, bringing very cold weather with strong winds, rain, heavy snowfall and sub-zero temperatures throughout Greece. Large movements of waterbirds occurred. During the second half of December, large numbers of swans, mostly Mute but also Whooper Swans were present in many areas of Greece, reaching as far south as Crete and Rhodes (Handrinos 1993). In Turkey during early 1993 1423 Mute Swans were counted at 13 localities, including 1244 at the Meriç Delta; the wintering population rarely exceeds 200 individuals. In addition 172 Whooper Swans were recorded at seven sites, the highest ever total (DHKD 1993). Bundy (1976) did not mention the occurrence of Mute Swan in Libya.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* On 24 July, one was seen 1 km east of Susah and one was hunting 3 km south of Qasr Libya. Five, including two 'pairs', were seen patrolling a small area at the mouth of Wadi Kuf on 25 July. These observations suggest that this species may breed in the Al Jabal al Akhdar area. Bundy (1976) mentioned only one definite breeding record in Libya, and breeding is not shown in Cramp and Simmons (1980).

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* A near adult female, in the possession of a falconer at Sawani al Mallahah, was said to have been taken from a nest in the vicinity of Darnah in 1990. This nest was situated on a very high cliff, and contained three chicks. Only the female was taken, two male chicks being left in the nest. When doubts were expressed as to the birds' local origin, he stressed that his story was true. The person who removed the chick from the nest fell and broke a leg. This would be the first known breeding in Libya.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Recorded only at Ayn Zayanah on 25 July: at least 100 adults and 20 recently fledged juveniles were seen, mostly in family groups. As indicated by the distraction display given by at least ten pairs, several still had chicks or even eggs. There were probably tens of breeding pairs at this locality in 1993. Local fishermen reported that boys regularly find eggs of this species, but were unable to find the small chicks. From our own experience as ringers in the Netherlands, PLM and PAW can confirm that small chicks are extremely difficult to find. Bundy (1976) mentioned this species only as a passage migrant.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* On 25 July, four adults and a juvenile were at Ayn Zayanah. The juvenile was begging for food, had rounded wings and appeared barely able to fly. It seems likely to have hatched locally. This is the first known breeding in Libya (see Bundy 1976).

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* On 21 July at Geziret al Elba, an adult moulting into winter plumage was with Kentish Plovers *C. alexandrinus* and Greater Sand Plovers *C. leschenaultii*. This is the first record in Libya.

DESCRIPTION

Observation. When discovered, the bird was feeding alone on a tidal pool. It was observed from a distance of 20-50 metres for about 15 minutes. It was seen flying twice for a short distance, once chased by a Kentish Plover. It was seen under good light conditions (sun from behind) with binoculars (10x40).

Size and posture. Size was directly compared with that of Greater Sand Plover (c.5) and Kentish Plover which were present in the same pool. It was clearly larger and more robustly built than Kentish Plover, but considerably smaller and more slender than Greater Sand Plover. Appeared clearly longer-legged than Kentish Plover. Bill not as long or heavy as in Greater Sand Plover.

Plumage. The bird was still in partial summer plumage, with extensive rusty coloured areas on the sides of the breast. Mantle, wings and head pale brown and heavily worn. There were only traces of a black mask on the side of the head. No moult of flight-feathers was visible when flying; this was very obvious in all Greater Sand Plover seen.

Bare parts. Bill black, leg colour not noted.

Call. Not heard.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* At least 15 on Geziret al Elba on 21 July suggests that the species could be more common in eastern Libya than previously recognised. All were moulting into winter plumage and were in active primary moult. Bundy (1976) mentioned only five records, mostly singles in winter and spring.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* There were no previous breeding records of Yellow-legged Gull from Libya (Bundy 1976, Cramp and Simmons 1983). In 1993, four breeding localities were located in eastern Libya. On 25 June, about ten pairs were present on Geziret al Elba. Three chicks were found, varying in age between one and two weeks (DAH and MFAE). On 21 July this colony had been completely vacated. On Geziret Garah on 27 July, 30 recent nests and five dead, partially fledged chicks were found. In spring 1993, five large chicks were taken by children from a small island at Marsa Lek. On 21-23 July, a flock of c. 200 birds (95% adults) was seen at a rubbish tip near Al Chadrun. These may have been breeding on nearby Geziret Bardaa, where according to local fishermen 'many birds breed'.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* Three adults and a fully fledged juvenile were at Wadi Tawurgha on 28 July. Since Gull-billed Terns are known to migrate in family groups, these birds could have been early migrants. Although this species is not known to breed in Libya, nesting at this locality cannot be excluded.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* Two breeding colonies were found: 40 pairs at Geziret al Elba and 1700 at Geziret Garah (see Meininger *et al.* 1994a for details).

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Two adults and a first-summer ('portlandica plumage') were at Tripoli on 18 July. An adult and first-summer were at Tripoli harbour on 29 and 30 July.

It seems not unlikely that first-summer Common Terns, with their bleached plumage and black bills, have been mistaken for Roseate Tern *S. dougallii* in the past. In the authors opinion, all Libyan claims of Roseate Tern (Bundy 1976) should be rejected, pending photographic evidence.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* Adults feeding fledged young were at Tripoli on 18 July. Approximately 25 pairs, most with fledged young, were on Geziret al Elba on 21 July. These birds were foraging on small fish in Ayn al Ghazalah Bay daily between 21 and 24 July. A concentration of over 300, apparently local breeders, was found at Ayn Zayanah on 25 July.

Amongst these were only three juveniles, indicating low breeding success. Eight were at Benghazi on the same day. Two were at Tajura on 29 July, with one at Tripoli harbour on 30 July. According to Bundy (1976), Little Tern breeds only sparingly in western Libya, in small numbers near Benghazi and probably near Zuwaytinah.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* Over 600 were observed, mainly in the north-west of the country and in the Al Jabal al Akhdar region, but also elsewhere (Figure 2). Bundy (1976) only considered the former to be a breeding area but in Cramp (1985) the Al Jabal al Akhdar region is also mapped. In December 1972 and January 1973, Palm Doves were very common around Nofilia, west of Bin Jawwad (Misonne 1973). This species has recently expanded its range in several parts of North Africa and the Middle East (Cramp 1985, Goodman & Meininger 1989).

Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* Two 20 km west of Bin Jawwad on 19 July and three 20 km west of Abyar Dabash on 20 July were both outside the known breeding range as shown in Bundy (1976) and Cramp (1988). On 20 July, five were seen 5 km west of Suluq. It is likely that this species has a continuous breeding area along the Libyan coast.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* On 21 July, six were on a sebkha (dry saltmarsh) 6 km west of Ayn al Ghazalah. There are no previous records from eastern Libya in summer or early autumn (Bundy 1976).

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* As suggested by our observations, the breeding range of Crested Lark is probably continuous along the Libyan coast (Figure 3). Over 100 were recorded. Seven, at four localities, were outside the breeding range as given in Bundy (1976) and Cramp (1988). In December 1972 and January 1973, Crested Lark was described as 'not very common' around Nofilia, west of Bin Jawwad (Misonne 1973).

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* Five, probably a pair with fledged young, were at Ayn Zayanah on 25 July. These birds, whose subspecific identity could not be established, were in suitable nesting habitat and local breeding seems likely. This would be the first known breeding of Yellow Wagtail in Libya (see Bundy 1976, Cramp 1988).

Red-rumped Wheatear *Oenanthe moesta* We recorded: a male 5 km west of Bishr; a pair between Bishr and Marsa al Burayqah; five males and two females between Marsa al Burayqah and Ajdabiya; a male near Sultan and a male 10 km south of Madinat al Abyar all on 20 July. A pair was at Ayn al Ghazalah between 21 and 24 July. Further records involved three males and a female on a sebkha (dry saltmarsh) 8 km west of Ayn al Ghazalah on 21 July; a male between Marsa Lek and Sawani al Mallahah, and a pair 6 km east of Qasr al Jady on 22 July; a female between Ayn al Ghazalah and Bumbah on 23 July and a male 30 km east of Ras Lanuf on 26 July. Several of these records are outside its previously known breeding range (Figure 4).

Fan-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* Two heard singing and another carrying food at the mouth of Wadi Ka'am on 28 July, clearly indicates local breeding. This is the first known breeding record for Libya (see Cramp 1992). Bundy (1976) mentioned only three records from Libya, including 20 singing at Wadi Tawurgha in January 1966, where absent in April (Bundy and Morgan 1969). There may have been a recent range extension from Tunisia into Libya. In August 1993, singing and apparently breeding Fan-tailed Warblers were noted at several sites in southern Tunisia which are not shown as breeding areas in Cramp (1992), e.g. at Gabés and near Netfa (PLM and PAW).

Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta* Four on 21 July in coastal desert 6 km west of Ayn al Ghazalah. Bundy (1976) knew of no records from near the north coast.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* One of the most frequently observed species, with a total of over 300 recorded. The observations in July 1993, including some records outside of the previously known breeding range, have been summarised in Figure 5. The breeding range is

probably continuous along the Libyan coast.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* At least 40 in Surt on 28 July were well outside the previously known breeding range (Figure 6). Other records involved: 30 at Bu Marim and three at Wadi Kuf Bridge on 20 July; 15 between Tubruq and Al Bardi on 22 July; 15 at Darnah and 90 (believed to be this species) near Qasr Libya on 24 July.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* The observations in July 1993, including several records outside of the previously known breeding range, have been summarised in Figure 7. On 19 July, at least 35 nests were seen in trees 15 km west of Surt.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to Dr Dawid Said Dawid, Director of the Marine Biology Research Centre, Tajura, Libya, for approval and general support of the survey. The project would not have been possible without the financial or material support of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, the Marine Biology Research Centre, Tajura (Libya), the Zueitina Oil Company, BirdLife International (through the BP Conservation Expedition Awards, UK) and the Foundation Tour du Valat (France). We gratefully acknowledge the generous help and support of many people and organisations, especially Henk Spiekman (WIWO), many employees of the Zueitina Oil Company and Nicola Baccetti (for translating literature from the Italian).

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APPENDIX

Gazetteer of Libyan localities mentioned in the text

This gazetteer contains all the localities mentioned in the text, with their latitude and longitude coordinates. Alternative place names used on other maps and in the literature are mentioned, though not always cross-referenced. In an attempt to standardise the spelling of Libyan locality names, the authors have followed those used on the 'Libya 1:2000000' map published by Kartografiai Vallalat, Budapest, Hungary in 1989. For those localities not mentioned on this map, parallel spellings have been adopted.

Locality (alternative name in brackets) or cross reference	Latitude	Longitude
Abyar Dabash	30° 16'	19° 26'
Ajdabiya (Ajadabia)	30° 41'	20° 13'
Al Bardi (Bardia)	31° 36'	25° 01'
Al Chadrun	32° 15'	23° 08'
Apollonia, see Susah		
Ayn al Ghazalah	32° 12'	22° 20'
Ayn al Ghazalah Bay (... Lagoon, ... Cove)	32° 13'	22° 20'
Ayn Zayanah	32° 06'	20° 05'
Benghazi (Banghazi)	32° 05'	20° 05'
Bin Jawwad (Ben Jawad, Marble Arch)	30° 51'	18° 06'
Bishr	30° 16'	19° 28'
Bu Marim	32° 09'	20° 28'
Bumbah (Bomba)	32° 18'	23° 09'
Darnah (Darnis, Derna)	32° 41'	22° 40'
Geziret Bardaa	32° 17'	23° 09'
Geziret al Elba (G. Maracheb, G. Ayn al Ghazalah)	32° 13'	23° 18'
Geziret Garah (G. Legarah, G. Zuwaytinah)	30° 47'	19° 54'
Madinat al Abyar	32° 10'	21° 30'
Marsa Lek	32° 00'	24° 59'
Qasr Libya	32° 40'	21° 17'
Sawani al Mallahah	31° 53'	25° 03'
Suluq (Soluk)	31° 41'	20° 11'
Susah (Apollonia)	32° 58'	21° 58'
Tajura (Taguira)	32° 56'	13° 20'
Tubruq (Tobruk)	32° 07'	23° 58'
Tripoli (Tarabulus)	32° 56'	13° 17'
Wadi Ka'am (Kaam)	32° 31'	14° 23'
Wadi Kuf (Kouf)	32° 50'	21° 17'
Wadi Tawurgha (Tawarga)	32° 01'	15° 30'
Zuwaytinah (Zuwatina, Zuweitina)	30° 54'	20° 12'

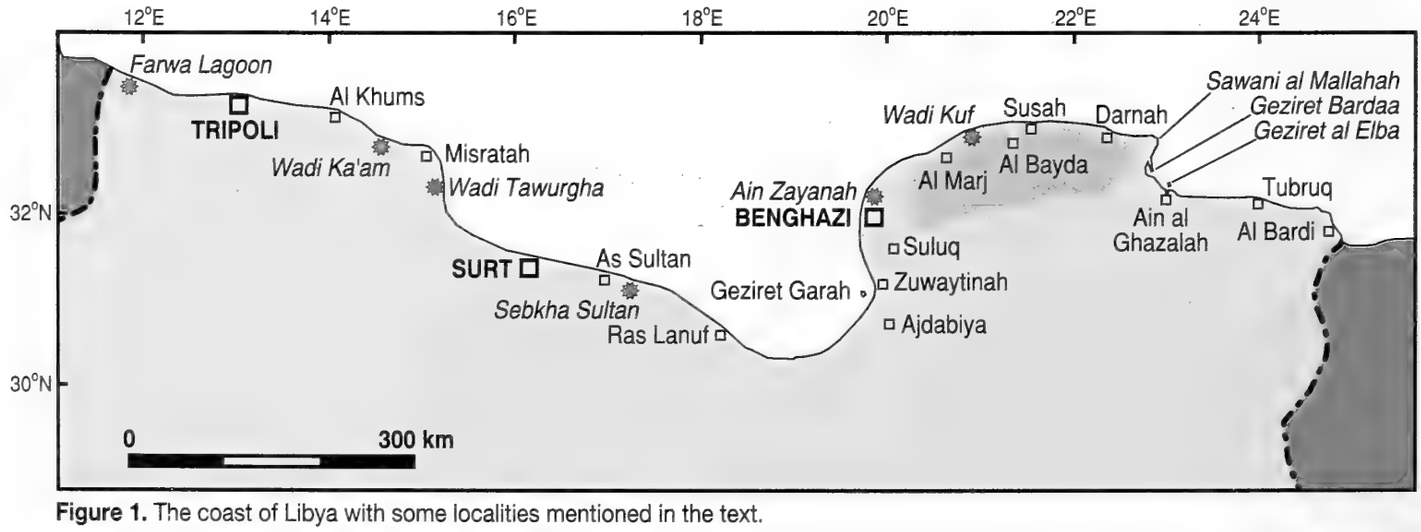

Figure 1. The coast of Libya with some localities mentioned in the text.

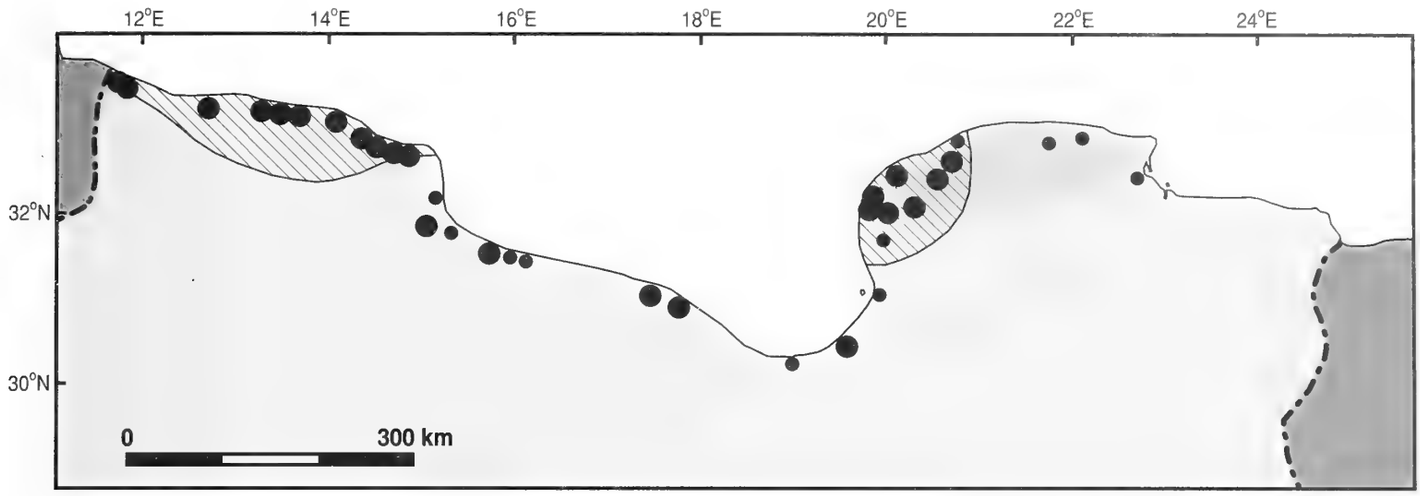

Figure 2. Localities of Laughing Doves *Streptopelia senegalensis* in Libya in July 1993. Small dot: 1-10 individuals; large dot: >10 individuals. Solid line indicates previously known breeding range (after Bundy 1976, Cramp 1985, Hollom *et al.* 1988).

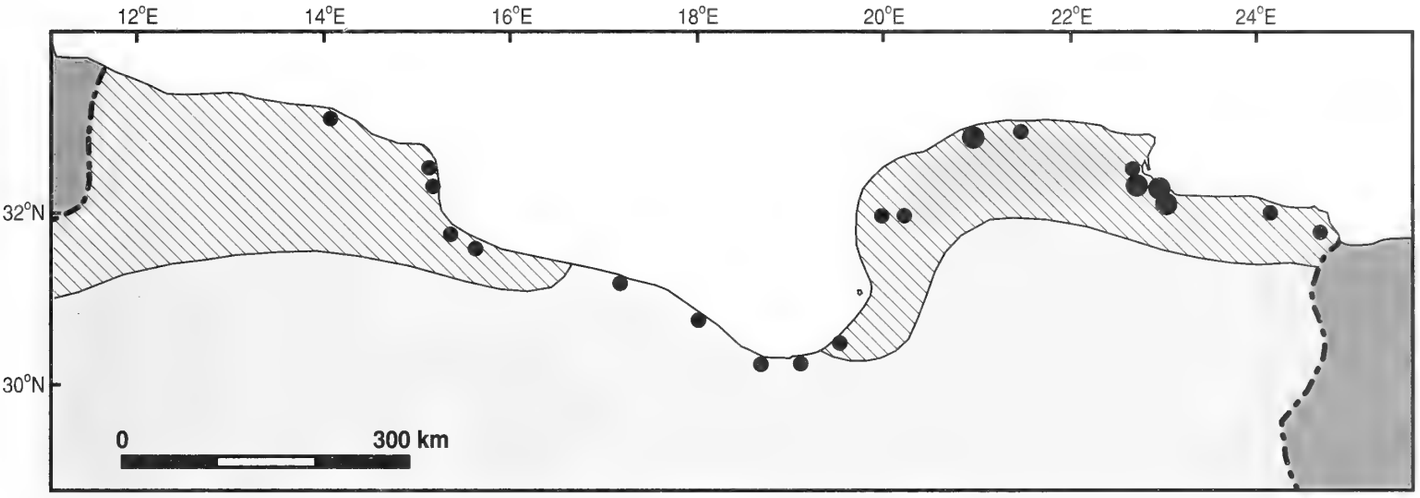

Figure 3. Localities of Crested Larks *Galerida cristata* in Libya in July 1993. Small dot: 1-10 individuals; large dot: >10 individuals. Solid line indicates previously known breeding range (after Bundy 1976, Cramp 1988, Hollom *et al.* 1988).

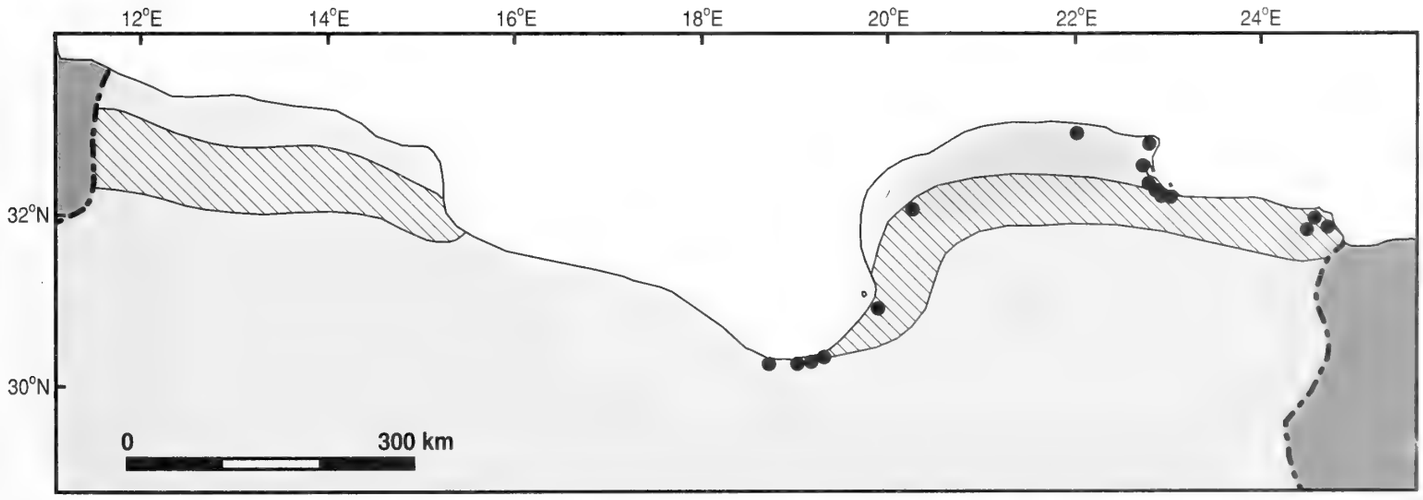

Figure 4. Localities of Red-rumped Wheatear *Oenanthe moesta* in Libya (dots) in July 1993. Small dot: 1-4 individuals. Solid line indicates previously known breeding range (after Bundy 1976, Cramp 1988, Hollom *et al.* 1988).

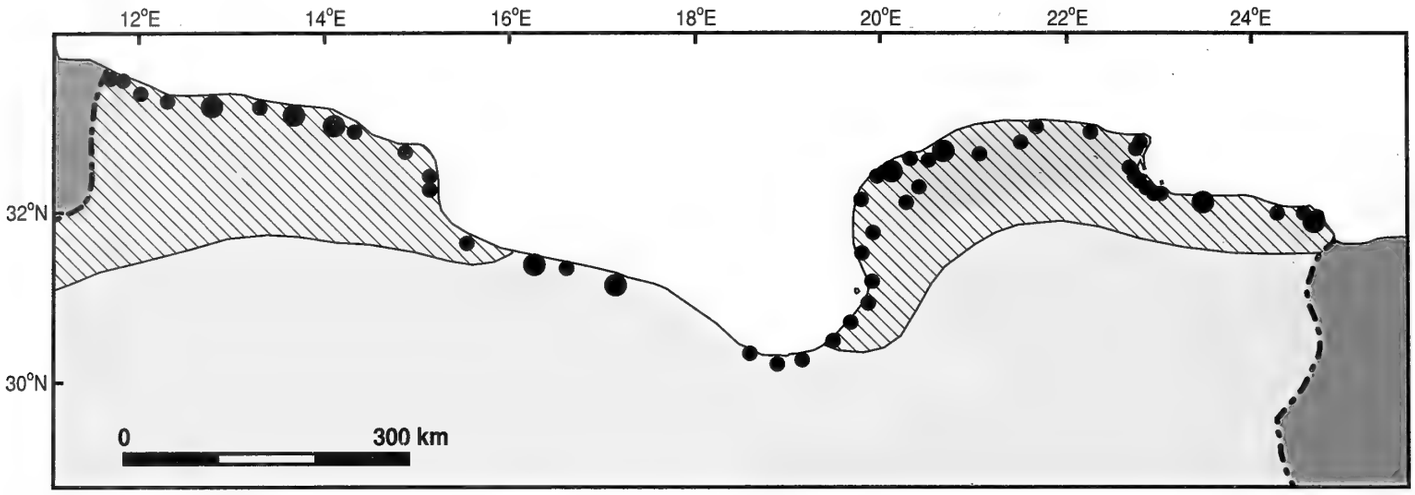

Figure 5. Localities of Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* in Libya (dots) in July 1993. Small dot: 1-10 individuals; large dot: >10 individuals. Solid line indicates previously known breeding range (after Bundy 1976, Cramp and Perrins 1993, Hollom *et al.* 1988).

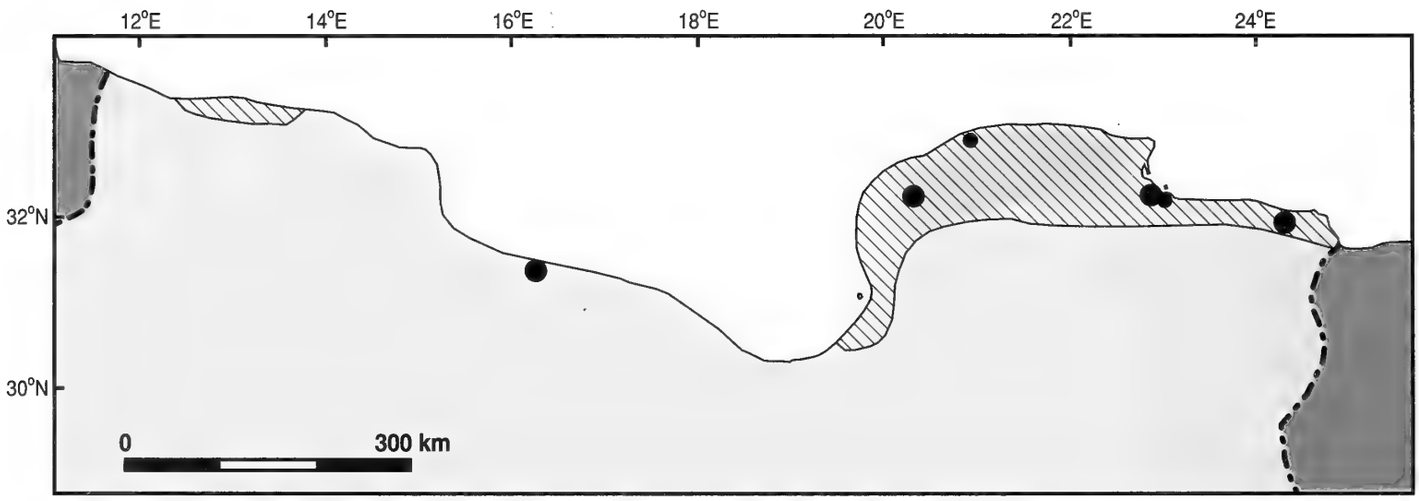

Figure 6. Localities of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in Libya in July 1993. Small dot: 1-10 individuals; large dot: >10 individuals. Solid line indicates previously known breeding range (after Bundy 1976, Hollom *et al.* 1988).

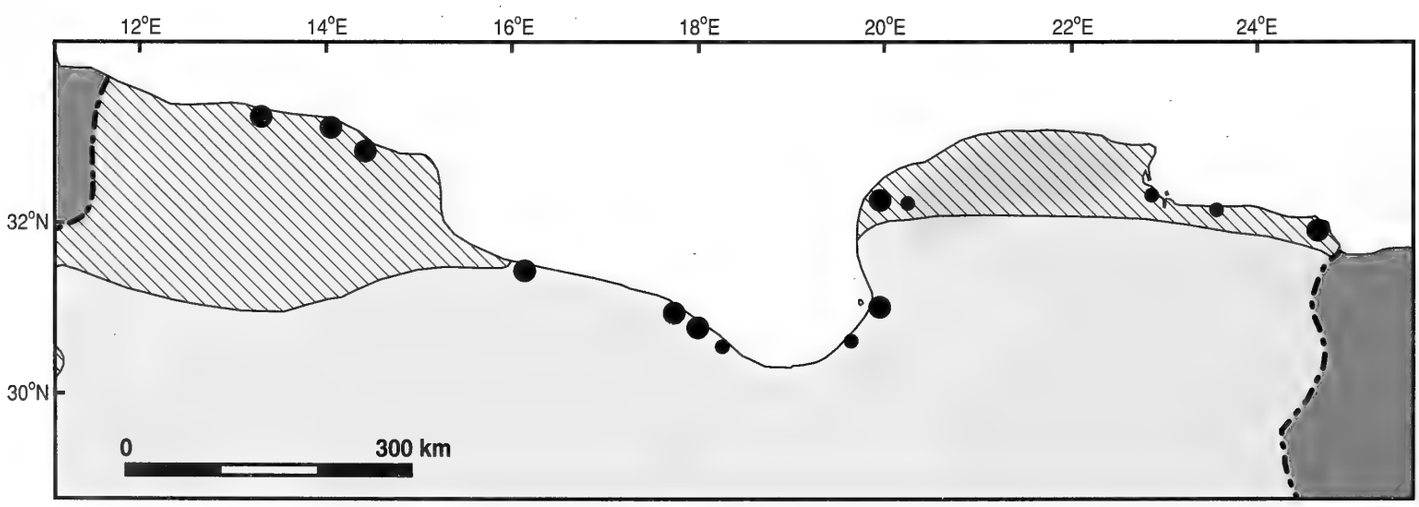

Figure 7. Localities of Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis* in Libya in July 1993. Small dot: 1-10 individuals; large dot: >10 individuals. Solid line indicates previously known breeding range (after Bundy 1976, Hollom *et al.* 1988).

Spring raptor movements at Gebel el Zeit, Egypt

ANDREW GRIEVE

BETWEEN ONE and two million raptors migrate through Eilat, Israel each spring. They arrive via south Sinai, Egypt, largely on a south-west to north-east course, indicating that they have left Africa by crossing the Gulf of Suez, Egypt, at its southern end. There are only a few observations in Egypt to support this supposition (Christensen *et al.* 1982, Shirihai 1987, Goodman & Meininger 1989, Shirihai & Christie 1992, Yosef 1995).

Thus far, approximately 130,000 raptors have been counted using the land bridge around the town of Suez at the northern end of the Gulf of Suez in the spring. After passing Suez they aparently take a more easterly or north-easterly route across north Sinai, well to the north of Eilat, and are clearly linked, through species composition, to the onward spring passage of raptors in northern Israel (Simmons 1951, Wimpfheimer *et al.* 1983, Davidovitt & Lesham 1984, Ben Zohar 1986).

The width of the Gulf of Suez appears to be a barrier to migrating raptors, judging from the paucity of reported sightings in Egypt, particularly of those using the 'very passive' method (Christensen *et al.* 1982, Braun 1985, Goodman & Meininger 1989). One of the narrowest parts is at the mouth of the Gulf of Suez, between Gebel el Zeit on the west side and Ras Garra on the Sinai side, a distance of about 25 kilometres. Gebel el Zeit at 457 metres is unusual in that it is the only montain ridge parallel and adjacent to the coast in the southern Gulf of Suez. It provides an excellent 'jumping' off point for raptors using thermals to cross the Gulf of Suez. Very large numbers of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* are also known to use this crossing in spring (Goodman & Meininger 1989). Gebel el Zeit thus appears to offer the first ideal place for raptors to cross into southern Sinai, after their long journey from the south (Fig. 1).

In order to test this hypothesis, counts of migrating raptors at Gebel el Zeit were carried out on 2nd April 1992, between 27th February and 9th March 1993, on 27th April 1994 and on 6th May 1994 (Table 1). These provide a cross-section of the migration period and indicate migration patterns for most of the commoner species passing through the region. Data for daily numbers at Eilat, Israel presumably exists for more recent years, but published data is only available for 1977 (Christensen *et al.* 1982) and at Suez, Egypt there have been spring counts in 1982 and 1990 (Wimpfheimer *et al.*1983, Meininger & Roder 1992). The similarities in species composition between Zeit and Eilat are striking, despite the different years involved (Table 2).

DISCUSSION

A total of 15,781 raptors was counted on 14 dates between 27th February and 6th May, over the three year period (Table 1). These counts indicate that a major raptor migration bottleneck exists at Gebel el Zeit. It is possible that the majority of the Eilat-bound birds cross the southern Gulf of Suez in this vicinity. It is also conceivable that birds moving through central Sinai to northern Israel cross here, rather than at Suez, particularly in favourable weather. Data was collected on the effects of wind, temperature, direction of migration, timing of movements, etc., but it was insufficient to draw conclusions at present.

Comparing the wider spring migration of raptors through sites in Israel and Egypt, it would appear that Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina* do not use the Zeit route and this conforms to the findings from Eilat in the spring (Braun 1985). The Suez area is clearly the main route for this species but numbers counted there in spring and autumn are still far short of those recorded in northern Israel in autumn (Bijlsma 1983, van Diggelen *et al.* 1987, Dovrat 1991).

For Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* the picture is slightly clearer with Zeit being the main route across the Gulf of Suez to Eilat earlier in spring, and Suez perhaps used later in the season.

These late birds, mainly comprising immatures, probably largely bypass Eilat, being recorded at sites such as Beersheba and Ein Gedi (Davidovitt & Lesham 1984, Ben Zohar 1986). These are presumably non-breeders.

Black Kites *Milvus migrans*, Steppe *Buteo buteo vulpinus* and Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* and Levant Sparrowhawks *Accipiter brevipes* cross from Gebel el Zeit to Sinai in large numbers each spring but later movements of Black Kites and Steppe Buzzards appear stronger at Suez.

Some intriguing questions are raised by the spring migration of raptors through the Red Sea mountains of Egypt. To what extent do the migration streams mix further south before reaching their respective crossings and what decides which birds to cross where? There is evidently some mixing in the Red Sea mountains as observations 4 - 15 km inland from Safaga in late March 1982 found Lesser Spotted and Steppe Eagles migrating together with large numbers of Steppe Buzzards (Sørensen 1983) and a short period of observation in the same area on 1 April 1992 produced Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, which exclusively uses the Suez route.

A full survey of raptor movements at Gebel el Zeit and adjacent areas may demonstrate this area to be one of the most important bottlenecks for migrant spring raptors in the Middle East. It is possible that the majority of the Eilat-bound birds cross the Gulf of Suez here, others may subsequently join those passing through the Negev and Dead Sea in Israel. The width of the migration front at Zeit itself, at 20 - 25 km, makes it relatively easy to monitor, but observers would need to cover possible crossing points up to 50 kilometres to the south, as in spring 1983 significant numbers were seen heading towards the islands off Ras Gemsa (Parr 1987). Raptor counts here would help fill a major gap in our knowledge of the spring migration of raptors through this part of the Middle East.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to Mindy Baha el Din and Stella M. Grieve for assistance with counting raptors at Gebel el Zeit in late April and early May 1994 and to Sherif Baha el Din who provided valuable comments on raptor migration in Egypt.

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Table 1. Numbers of raptors migrating at Gebel el Zeit, Egypt on dates in 1992, 1993 and 1994.

	1993 Feb 27th	28th	1993 Mar 1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th *	8th **	9th	1992 Apr 2nd ***	1994 Apr 27th	1994 May 6th
Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*													71	1,607
Black Kite *Milvus migrans*				1			1	2			3	565	14	3
Red Kite *Milvus milvus*											2			
Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*	2	3	1		1	2		1		2	4	26	9	
Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*		1			1					1	7	52		
Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*				1	1						1	1	3	1
Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*												2	2	
Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*													1	1
Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*												2	3	
Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*													2,372	1
Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus*		96	6	16	9	12	3	23		68	475	5,854	1,114	98
Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*			1			1					3	4	5	
Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*	1,158	108	39	130	266	22		58	2	401	655	232	86	2
Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*	2	2	1		2					2	3	6	1	
Booted Eagle *Heiraaetus pennatus*		1										18	8	5
Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*	1	1			1									
Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*													1	
Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*						1			1				2	1
TOTAL RAPTORS	1,163	212	48	148	282	37	4	85	2	474	1,153	6,765	3,691	1,717

* Due to transport problems a passage of eagles may have been missed on this day as weather conditions appeared very suitable.
** A better count site discovered at 11.00hrs, some birds may have been missed prior to this time.
*** Only counted between 12.00 and 16.00 hrs, it is likely that much larger numbers of birds had passed through earlier in the day.

Table 2. Species comparison of raptors migrating in the spring at three locations in the Red Sea/Sinai region

	27th Feb to 9th Mar			Early April			Late April			Early May		
	Zeit 1993	Eilat 1977	Suez 1982	Zeit 2/4/92 *	Eilat 2/4/77	Suez 2/4/90	Zeit 27/4/94	Eilat 28/4/77 **	Suez 27/4/82	Zeit 6/5/94	Eilat 6/5/77	Suez 6/5/82
Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*							71	672		1,607	22,227	2
Black Kite *Milvus migrans*	7	76	1	565	1,100	39	14	18	67	3	4	170
Red Kite *Milvus milvus*	2											
Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*	16	58	74	26	24	8	9	7	17		9	15
Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*			20			2						
Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*	10	8	386	52	4	17		15				3
Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*	3			1	5		3		1	1	2	1
Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*				2			2					
Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*				1			1			1		
Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*		1		2	1	1	3	3	1			
Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*							2,372	40		1		1
Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus*	708	150	53	5,854	7,578	551	1,114	115	2,544	98	39	2,202
Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*	5		31		4	2	5					
Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*			4,195									7
Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*	2,837	2,292	791	232	221	21	86	8	510		2	413
Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*	12	10		6	5		1					4
Booted Eagle *Heiraaetus pennatus*	1	1		18	9	2	8	2	14	5	2	3
Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*	3	19				2			2			5
Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*							1					
Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*		2			2			1				

* Raptors only counted between 12.00 and 16.00 hrs and probably a larger number passed earlier in the day.
** Data taken from 28th April as few birds noted at Eilat on 27th April.

The first Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* in Egypt

MINDY AND SHERIF BAHA EL DIN

ON 2 April 1993, along with three colleagues, we were birdwatching at the sewage ponds at 10th of Ramadan City, 55 km north-east of Cairo. In addition to the usual resident species, a variety of migrants was present. A lone pratincole was spotted hawking insects above the settling pools. It was initially idenitified as a Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* based on the apparently uniform dark underwing; the absence of a white trailing edge to the secondaries; and the lack of contrast on the upperwing. Since Black-winged Pratincole was a new species for all but one of our group, it was studied in flight for over ten minutes.

The bird landed on an islet and was observed through a telescope for 10-15 minutes at approxi mately 80 metres distance. Closer views revealed that the bird had a distinct orangish wash on the breast and upper belly, unusual for Black-winged Pratincole. The initial identification was obviously erroneous as the bird then stretched its wings, exhibiting chestnut on the underwings in the process. Whilst Black-winged Pratincole was now discounted, the bird was atypical of Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, a species with which we were all very familiar.

The pratincole took flight and was watched as it circled the ponds feeding on insects. Against the overcast sky the dark chestnut-red on the underwings was only visible with difficulty. We came to the conclusion that the bird must be an aberrant Collared Pratincole, although there was some dissatisfaction with this identification.

The birds' true identity was only resolved a fortnight later, when the paper by Burns (1993) brought to our attention the 1981 record of Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* in Britain. After examining the photographs and description therein and comparing it with our own notes, we decided that the bird on 2 April had also been an Oriental Pratincole. Other literature was then consulted, particularly Hayman *et al.* (1986) and Lewington *et al.* (1991). All the major identification criteria mentioned in these publications matched those of the bird we had seen, especially the fact that it resembled both Collared and Black-winged Pratincoles. The only feature of Oriental Pratincole which we failed to note was the shorter, less deeply forked tail.

General appearance and structure. No plumage wear evident. Similar in size and structure to both Collared and Black-winged Pratincoles, but slightly smaller than the former. The apparently smaller size could have been due to the shorter tail, although this was not specifically noted by us.
Head. Black line from gape forming necklace around cream-coloured throat patch. On close inspection through telescope the necklace appeared broken as if formed by small streaks, similar to the description given in Burns (1993).
Upperparts. Dark olive-brown (distinctly darker than in Collared Pratincole). Rump and base of tail white. Flight feathers slightly darker than wing coverts and mantle, but not easy to discern (lack of contrast on upperwing similar to Black-winged Pratincole). Complete absence of white trailing edge to secondaries. Primaries and secondaries black. Due to the lack of contrast between the black outer wing and chestnut inner wing, the underwing in flight often appeared uniformly dark (similar to Black-winged Pratincole).
Underparts. White undertail coverts and belly. Distinct orange wash to lower breast and upper belly. Underwing coverts and axillaries dark chestnut-red (the chestnut area on the underwings appeared more restricted and darker than on Collared Pratincole).
Bare parts. Bill black with red gape. Neither eye or leg colour were noted.

This is the first record in Egypt and the third in the Western Palearctic. There were two other Oriental Pratincoles in the Western Palearctic in spring 1993: the first Cyprus record was found on 23 April (Rowlands 1994) and the third record for Britain was present in Norfolk from 14

May into August (Rogers *et al.* 1994). These additional sightings lend support to the Egyptian record and indicate a notable dispersion of the species outside its normal range in this period.

Oriental Pratincole breeds in southern and eastern Asia from Pakistan to north-east China. The northern populations are migratory, wintering south to Australia (Lewington *et al.* 1991). Long distance vagrancy has been recorded and it has appeared in a number of areas outside its usual range, including Alaska (Hayman *et al.* 1986). Prior to 1993 there had been just two records in the Western Palearctic, both in Britain: in June-October 1991 and June-October 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 82:505-563). There is a previous record of Oriental Pratincole in the Middle East, from the United Arab Emirates, on 23-27 November 1992 (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 30:46). Prior to 1981 the westernmost records came from the Seychelles and Mauritius (Burns 1993).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful to John Tidy, one of the other observers of this bird, for reviewing the paper and commenting on our observations.

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Mindy and Sherif Baha el Din, 4 Ismail El Mazni St., Apt. 8, Heliopolis, Cairo, Egypt

The first Woodlark *Lullula arborea* in Saudi Arabia

BRIAN S. MEADOWS AND PETER SYMENS

DURING the afternoon of 22 December 1994 while birdwatching along the beach immediately south of the Holiday Inn, Jubail, BSM found a Woodlark *Lullula arborea* in an area of low sandy dunes. Adjacent to the dunes there was an open grove of introduced shade trees - mainly *Tamarisk, Phoenix, Ficus* and *Ziziphus*.

BSM was watching a Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*, near the grove, when a short-tailed lark with rather rounded wings and much smaller than a Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, landed close to the pipit. It was exceptionally tame, permitting observation down to a few metres. With the sun directly behind the observer excellent views of the bird were obtained. As the bird flew in, the immediate thought was of Small Skylark *Alauda gulgula*. This species was easily eliminated by the presence of buff supercilia which clearly met on the nape and the very obvious black-and-white mark on the leading edge of the wing. The bird was observed for about 10 minutes.

In the evening, BSM informed PS who relocated the bird three days later in similar habitat north of the Holiday Inn. It was observed under similar conditions for about five minutes, after which it flew off in a southerly direction. There were no further sightings.

General appearance and behaviour. A relatively plump bird with a noticeably short tail; it searched for food in an active bustling manner. The bill (for a lark) was thin. It occasionally took short, low hesitant flights for no apparent reason. Flight buoyant, quite unlike other species of larks, while the short tail combined with the rather rounded wings gave it a very distinct silhouette. A crest was indicated but never seen erect.
Plumage. Upperparts mainly ginger-brown with black centers to all feathers of crown, nape, mantle and upper back. Darker tail with white tip and pale brown edges. Wings also ginger-brown with black centres to feathers and distinct black-and-white mark on the leading edge which was always clearly visible, even at rest. Facial pattern dominated by buff eye-ring and long supercilia which met on nape. Breast had a distinct broad necklace of narrow black streaks on a white background. Streaking extended onto the flanks. Rest of underparts buff-white.
Bare parts. Iris dark brown. Two-toned bill: upper mandible dark grey with pinkish-flesh cutting edge of the same colour as lower mandible. Legs dull brownish-yellow.
Voice. On 25 December the bird was heard to call repeatedly in flight: a characteristic and loud two-syllable 'duw-leet'.

Hollom *et al.* (1988) mention Woodlark as a vagrant to eastern Arabia south to Bahrain. There are three records from Bahrain, involving four individuals, in December (twice) and February (Nightingale and Hill 1993). In their checklist of the birds of the Arabian Gulf States, Bundy and Warr (1980) list records from Kuwait in August (one), October (one record of eight birds), December to January and February (twice). Furthermore they included a record from Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in December 1973. Another Woodlark in Saudi Arabia was mentioned by Jennings (1984): a single bird at Jubail in March 1983. In the absence of a description, both Saudi records were regarded as unacceptable by Bundy *et al.* (1989) in their review of the avifauna of the Eastern Province. Therefore this new record is the first to be documented in Saudi Arabia.

The plumage of the Jubail bird, as shown by the narrowness of the black breast streaks and white, rather than buff, background, indicates that the bird was of the race *pallida* (Cramp 1988), which breeds in the Mediterranean region and the northern Middle East from Turkey east to Iran. It is migratory or partially so in the northern parts of its range, but mainly resident or dispersive elsewhere. Specimens of this race have been obtained in winter in Egypt (Cramp 1988).

During the second half of December 1994 there was an influx of several other rarities into the Jubail area, including Striated Scops Owl *Otus brucei* (a road-kill on 18/12), Robin *Erithacus rubecula* (several birds throughout December), Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* (one on 19/12), Blackbird *T. merula* (one on 22/12), Red-fronted Serin *Serinus pusillus* (one on 31/12) and Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* (one on 27/12). The latter two species constituted new records for the Arabian peninsula (Symens in press, Meadows in press). Furthermore, both Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* and Common Linnet *C. cannabina* were observed in larger numbers than usual in Kuwait (C. W. T. Pilcher pers. comm.). All these species breed in northern parts of the Middle East and have dispersive, short-distance migrations, only occasionally reaching as far south as the Arabian peninsula (Bundy *et al.* 1989; Hollom *et al.* 1988).

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Brian S. Meadows, P. O. Box 10476, Jubail 31961, Saudi Arabia (Address for correspondence: 9 Old Hall Lane, Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex, C014 8LE, U.K.).

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The first White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* in Turkey

ALBERTO SORACE

ON the afternoon of 12 August 1993 I observed a juvenile White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* in a barren stony area, near Pinarbasi, 100 km east of Kayseri (Southern Coastlands), Turkey. The bird was identified on the basis of the following features.

Behaviour and shape were typical of a wheatear *Oenanthe* sp. and the general colouration was black except for a large white rump, undertail coverts and white outer tail feathers, without a black terminal band. It appeared larger than other wheatears that I had previously noticed in Turkey. The observation lasted a few minutes, always at close range. There were no other wheatear species available for comparison.

The species breeds in North Africa and parts of the Arabian peninsula, being generally scarcer in the east, and has been recorded as a vagrant in Cyprus (in March 1970, May 1985 and March 1993; Flint and Stewart 1993, Cyprus Ornithological Society (1957) 40th Report) and Malta (in April; Cramp 1988), but not previously in Turkey (Kasparek 1992). The record has been accepted by the Italian Rarities Committee.

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The first Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* in Egypt

MINDY BAHA EL DIN

ON the afternoon of 12 October 1988 whilst birdwatching at Nama Bay, north-east of Sharm el Sheikh, South Sinai, I heard an unusual call emanating from an *Acacia* grove. Upon closer approach I located a dark brown *Phylloscopus* warbler foraging on the ground. Based on the voice and behaviour, I immediately recognised the bird as a Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, a Siberian vagrant which I had seen on two occasions in the United Kingdom. The following morning I videotaped the bird and although unable to obtain close footage, the five minute recording captured its distinctive behaviour and call. The tape was subsequently shown to a number of colleagues with experience of the species, who were able to confirm the identification.

Structure and size. A *phylloscopus* warbler similar in size and shape to Chiffchaff *P. collybita*, but smaller than Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi*, which has a proportionately longer head and body. Posture appeared hunched and neckless as described by Madge (1990).
Plumage. Prominent buff supercilia and dark eyestripe extending well behind the eye. Dark brown upperparts. Underparts buff with a warm rusty wash on the breast sides, flanks and undertail coverts.
Bare parts. Dark pink legs, longer than in Chiffchaff. Bill fine, unlike the stout bill of Radde's Warbler. Upper mandible grey-black. Lower mandible visibly paler (yellowish).
Behaviour. Very active. Kept to the ground, only perching in bushes when disturbed. Constantly flicked its tail and wings nervously as it hopped along the ground. Wings had a distinct drooped appearance and tail was held slightly cocked.
Voice. Extremely vocal, frequently uttering a loud, harsh "chek" as it flicked its wings and tail.

This individual is the first record of the species in Egypt (see Rosenzweig 1989). Goodman & Meininger (1989) knew of no previous occurrences. The species breeds from Siberia to China, wintering in India, south China and south-east Asia (Lewington *et al.* 1991). It is a rare autumn vagrant to Europe with e.g. 154 in the United Kingdom by the end of 1994 (Rogers *et al.* 1995) and 15 in the Netherlands by the end of 1993 (Wiegant *et al.* 1995). Hollom *et al.* (1988) list Dusky Warbler as an accidental in Morocco and Yemen. East Asian vagrants are now regularly recorded at nearby Eilat (Israel) during migration periods and occasionally reach Sharm el Sheikh, especially in autumn (e.g. Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*, Yellow-breasted *Emberiza aureola* and Little Buntings *E. pusilla*).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank my husband, Sherif, for his constant encouragement and invaluable advice.

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REVIEWS & Recent Literature

del Hoyo, J, Elliott, A & Sargatal, J (eds.) (1994) *Handbook of the Birds of the World* Vol 2, New World Vultures to Guineafowl. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. pp 638, 60 colour plates, numerous photographs, price £98.

In my review of volume 1 of this monumental project (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 31: 36–37), I said that the authors had set themselves a high standard to maintain and I'm pleased to say that they have not failed in this task. Volume 2 is exceptionally well produced and the colour photographs continue to be of the highest quality, both in terms of quality and reproduction. Similarly the colour plates are well executed and are both pleasing aesthetically and factually correct.

This volume follows the same format as the first with introductory chapters to each family covering systematics, morphology, habitat preferences, general habits, food and feeding, movements, relationships with Man and status and conservation. These are followed by the individual species accounts.

I must confess I have not read this volume from cover to cover (!) but checking the accounts of those species with which I am particularly familiar showed them to be correct and up-to-date. The one exception I found relates to Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus* and African Hawk Eagle *H. spilogaster*, where the occurrence of a small, isolated population of the former in Djibouti has not been noted by the authors.

The authors have acknowledged that their original intention to complete this work in ten volumes was a little ambitious and twelve are now intended; future volumes are destined to appear at 18 month intervals. At the current price, this represents a major investment for anyone planning to purchase the complete set, but I can say nothing more than that this publication is worth every penny – start saving now for volume three and beyond!

Geoff Welch

Adolfsson, K. & Cherrug, S. (1995) *Bird Identification: a reference guide.* Anser Supplement 37, Lund. pp 379, price 220 SEK incl. postage within Europe (or 280 SEK if paying by cheque).

There have been a number of recent attempts to catalogue the vast (and ever burgeoning) wealth of photographic identification material available in European journals. This new index goes a giants leap further. Over 11,800 papers concerning the identification of all species occurring in the Western Palearctic and Arabia are referenced, as are many photographs which illustrate rarer species, interesting races and confusing hybrids. Such a selection has been necessarily arbitrary. References from 66 major West European and North American ornithological journals (including *Sandgrouse* and *OSME Bulletin*) published between 1975 and early 1995 are included. Unfortunately it proved impossible to access every issue of each publication throughout the two-decade period covered: those issues/volumes not covered are highlighted in an easily scanned introductory table.

References are arranged in systematic order. The compilers have, with a small number of exceptions, chosen to follow the nomenclature of Beaman in *Palearctic Birds* (1994). For each species, references are placed in alphabetical order according to the country of publication. This does not necessarily make it easy to immediately locate a given source, especially under those species for which there is a mass of published information (e.g. Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* has over 3 pages of references), but it is difficult to envisage how the authors could have devised a perfect system. For each

referenced article the following information is provided: title, author(s), journal (including date, volume, issue and page numbers), country of publication and summary language. Photo references are clearly indicated, with the month in which they were taken provided (where known), although the photographer is not named. Photos of some easily identified rare species are not included.

I cannot recommend this compilation too highly: to authors, researchers, and amateur birders alike it will prove invaluable. If you ever ask 'where and when was that paper on Pechora Pipit/Soft-plumaged Petrel/ ....published?', you will find this compendium to be the answer to your prayers. Adolfsson and Cherrug plan to produce an updated version on computer diskette by 1997, but don't wait that long to bring order to chaos.

Guy Kirwan

McGowan, P. J. K., Dowell, S. D., Carroll, J. P. & Aebischer, N. J. and the WPA/BirdLife/SSC Partridge, Quail and Francolin Specialist Group (compilers) (1995) *Partridge, Quails, Francolins, Snowcocks and Guineafowl. Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan 1995–1999.* IUCN, Gland, Switzerland. 102pp.

This volume is well researched and produced, concisely written, with a balance of text, maps and vignettes, and most importantly, will surely prove to be a key tool in the conservation of this group across the globe.

Divided into four main parts, it starts with an overview of the whole group, providing a basis for the selection of taxa, the layout of the Action Plan itself, a breakdown of the threats affecting the group and the action required for the continued survival of the taxa covered. The second section focuses on the criteria (Mace–Lande categories) used to define the taxa requiring action, and from the most recent data available provides a summary table of subspecies, area, range and population size, population trend, threats, M–L category and future actions covering all 141 species, plus a selected number of subspecies. Part three then concentrates on those taxa identified as threatened, and using a geographical breakdown, provides summary information on the conservation and taxonomic status, current distribution, population status, threats and future action required for each. The final chapter details individual projects which the Action Plan aims to have completed, or initiated, during the period covered.

Whilst the last two chapters are mostly biased towards sub-tropical and tropical areas with a high number of endemic species, it has a clear bearing on the Middle East, defining both Caspian Snowcock *Tetraogallus caspius* and See-see Partridge *Ammoperdix heyi* as threatened, suggesting a survey of the former within the next five years.

John Muddeman

Hirschfeld, E. (1995) *Birds in Bahrain - a study of their migration patterns 1990-1992.* Hobby Publications, Dubai. 124pp, map, tables and several line drawings. £8 (postfree orders, with sterling cheque, to Colin Richardson, P.O. Box 50394, Dubai, UAE).

A small archipelago of desert islands in the Arabian Gulf may seem the last place in which to find a diversity of birds but having established that an interesting avifauna was to be found there the author took employment in Bahrain from late 1989 until early 1993. He was rewarded with ample spare time to pursue his interests in ornithology and heavy metal rock music; diverse pastimes which converged on at least one occasion when Erik observed the apparent attraction that such music held for Caspian Plovers *Charadrius asiaticus*. The culmination of his more serious and untiringly sustained observations of Bahrain's birds can be found in the pages of this most interesting book, which is essentially a detailed study of migration patterns between 1990 and 1992.

The introductory sections should be carefully read, particularly those relating to the interpretation of the statistics, histograms and graphs found in the species accounts. There follows a description of the study sites - a list of localities which birders both established and new on Bahrain will find most useful since it expands considerably the information previously available. The majority of the text

(113 pages) is devoted to specific accounts, treating concisely the status and migration on Bahrain (and often in neighbouring states) of the 250 species observed or ringed by the author. Students of bird migration and distribution will particularly welcome the many observations on subspecies that the author and others have made, perhaps now the question over which subspecies of Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* is more numerous on spring migration in eastern Arabia is resolved. Together with graphs and histograms the whole is enlivened by the fine line drawings by Hans Larsson. Useful appendices include a complete checklist of the 303 species recorded in Bahrain.

I spent an interesting couple of days comparing the species accounts with those in *Birds of Bahrain* (Nightingale & Hill 1993). Conclusions vary sufficiently to stimulate further study, something which the authors of both have sought to encourage. As we have come to expect from Hobby Publications this is a well produced, attractive and reasonably priced work. I should mention that in my copy, page seven should be read before page six; Arab readers will encounter no such difficulty as a result of this computer hiccup. One of the author's aims was to complement and update the aforementioned *Birds of Bahrain*, and in this he has been successful. In conclusion may I recommend this excellent study to everyone with an interest in Bahrain, in Arabian ornithology and in Middle Eastern bird migration.

Tom Nightingale

Jennings, M. C. (1995) *An Interim Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia.* NCWCD, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. pp134, price £8 (postfree direct from NCWCD, P.O. Box 61681, 11575 Riyadh).

Forty years after the publication of Meinertzhagen's seminal *Birds of Arabia* (1954), and ten years after the inception of the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia (ABBA) project, this interim atlas provides a measure of the increase in our knowledge of the birds of Arabia during the course of the past two decades. It is a welcome summary of the data collected thus far on all the birds known to have bred in the Arabian peninsula. It is a credit to all who have devoted time and effort towards this work's production. The book is well presented, with easily readable distribution summaries of the known status, distribution and breeding biology of each species. The text is attractively enhanced by a number of pen and ink sketches.

It is in three parts: chapter one presents an overview of the geology, climate, zoogeography and vegetation of the region, whilst chapter two discusses the various habitats found in Arabia, their characteristic bird communities, and the ways in which both are constantly changing. Environmental and conservation issues are reviewed; progress in addressing these is also covered. The role of NGO's in influencing both official and public opinion is emphasised. Chapter three describes the methodology behind the ABBA project, and goes on to present, in the form of distribution maps and summary text, the data collected thus far. It is by definition an interim atlas, and one is therefore conscious of how much more there is still to do. No records prior to 1954 are included and a significant number of ABBA squares have yet to be visited. Nonetheless the data accumulated are already impressive. This presentation is clear and easy to use. Michael Jennings is to be congratulated for his vision and persistence in overcoming many obstacles along the way, and the NCWCD for their support and assistance. There is still much to be done before the final atlas is published, but this interim version will focus attention on areas where further work is needed. Meanwhile it provides an essential reference for all those with an interest in the Arabian avifauna.

Derek Harvey

The Raptors of Britain and Europe by Paul Doherty. A Bird Images video guide narrated by Bill Oddie. VHS video. 85 minutes. 38 species. £16.95 (+ p&p £2 UK & Europe, £4 World). Available from Bird Images, 28 Carousel Walk, Sherburn in Elmet, North Yorkshire LS25 6LP, UK.

This video guide to the raptors of Europe is surprisingly informative and well presented. The use of film allows the 'jizz' of birds,

particularly important for this, at times testing group, to be appreciated in a way never possible from books. The film is compiled from footage shot in many areas of the Western Palearctic (much of it obtained in Israel) by Paul Doherty, complimented by an informative and thorough comentary from Bill Oddie.

For each species a brief description of the habitat and range is followed by more detailed descriptions of jizz and identification characteristics with difficult species groups being compared and discussed. The identification characters used are accurate, comprehensive and well described, with intelligent use of both moving footage and stills and different ages, sexes, morphs and subspecies being covered where relevant. I was impressed with that accorded the ringtail harriers, which was particularly comprehensive and well illustrated, using both typical and extreme individuals of a variety of ages and sexes. The video approaches the identification of this tricky trio in a sensible way, impossible in a field guide, by firstly establishing the age and sex and then the specific identity of the bird.

Many species likely to be seen in the Middle East, including all the more common raptors that form the spectacular migrations through the area are covered. This video is the best technique, barring field experience, for learning to identify birds of prey. I would recommend it to birders wishing to improve their identification of raptors.

Rob Williams

RECENT LITERATURE

Compiled by Guy M. Kirwan & Effie Warr

This review, which will be produced annually, mainly covers papers published in the West European literature considered to be of most relevance to birders resident in the region. All were published in 1995 unless otherwise stated. Papers dealing with aspects of the following topics are usually included: status and distribution, breeding biology, taxonomy and identification. Papers co-written by more than two authors are referenced only to the lead authors name. The compilers would welcome the submission of material for potential inclusion; preferably by sending a reprint, alternatively the citation and a summary of the contents. These should be sent via the club address: OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL.

Regional

Alström, P. Identification of Siberian, Black-throated, Radde's, Arabian and Brown Accentors. *Birding World* 8 (3): 108-112.

Becker, P. Identification of Water Rail and *Porzana* crakes in Europe. *Dutch Birding* 17 (5): 181-211 [*comprehensive treatment of the identification of this group, translated from the original paper published in German in* Limicola, *accompanied by many colour photos and several colour plates*].

Carey, G & Olsson, U. Field identification of Common, Wilson's, Pintail and Swinhoe's Snipes. *Birding World* 8 (5): 179-190 [*includes photos taken in Israel and Oman*].

Clark, W. S. and Shirihai, H. Identification of Barbary Falcon. *Birding World* 8 (9): 336-343.

Clement, P. Identification pitfalls and assessment problems 17. Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*. *Brit. Birds* 88 (6): 291-295.

Dubois, P. J. & Yésou, P. Identification of Western Reef Egrets and dark Little Egrets. *Brit. Birds* 88 (7): 307-319.

Ebels, E. B. & Laan, J. van der Die Bestimmung des Blauwangenspints *Merops persicus* und sein Vorkommen in Europa. *Limicola* 9 (4): 189-203 [*Identification of Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, includes several photos taken in the Middle East*].

Flint, P. Separation of Cyprus Pied Wheatear from Pied Wheatear. *Brit. Birds* 88 (5): 230-241.

Forsman, D. Field identification of female and juvenile Montagu's and Pallid Harriers. *Dutch Birding* 17 (2): 41-54 [*some new features are presented*].

Gruber, D. Die Kennzeichen und das Vorkommen der Wießkopfmöwe *Larus cachinnans* in Europa. *Limicola* 9 (3): 121-165

[*includes discussion of the identification of several forms found in the Middle East, accompanied by many photos*].

Helbig, A.J. *et al.* Genetic differentation and phylogenetic relationships of Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* and Green Warbler *P. nitidus*. *J. Avian Biology* 26: 139-153 [*based on the results of mtDNA sequencing and differences in vocalisations the authors conclude that the two races of Bonelli's Warbler:* bonelli *and* orientalis *are probably best regarded as separate taxa worthy of specific status*].

Hoogendoorn, W. and Pop, R. Kennzeichen der Dunnschnabelmöwe *Larus genei* in Zweiten Winter - und zweiten Sommerkleid. *Limicola* 9 (1): 15-23 [*field charcters for separation of second-year Slender-billed Gull are presented and discussed*].

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Arabian Gulf

Bourne, W. R. P. Viewpoint: Persian/Arabian gulf wars and the environment. *Pacific Seabirds* 22 (1): 3-6.

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Cyprus

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Egypt

Andriesse, A J. *et al.* Bearded Tits in Egypt in December 1987. *Dutch Birding* 17 (4): 159-160 [*the first country record*].

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Israel

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Chandler, R & Shirihai, H. Kentish Plovers with complete breast-bands. *Brit. Birds* 88 (3): 136-140 [*the authors draw attention to a potential identification pitfall based on observations in Israel*].

Erez, A. & Yom-Tov, Y. Reproduction of a Hooded Crow *Corvus corone* population in Israel. *Ardea* 83 (2): 405-409.

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into question, see Bourne above]

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Gaucher, P. *et al.* The Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* on the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia: distribution, numbers and consevation. *Ibis* 137 (1): 29-34.

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Turkey

Atkinson, P. W. *et al.* The distribution and status of Caucasian Black Grouse in north-eastern Turkey. *Proc. Sixth Int. Grouse Symp.* 131-135.

Have, T. M. van der & Berk, V. van den Paddyfield Warbler in Göksu delta, southern Turkey, in September 1991. *Dutch Birding* 17 (1): 20-21 [*one of only a handful of observations away from the breeding areas in eastern Turkey*].

Kirwan, G. Recent records of rare birds in Turkey. *Zool. in Middle East* 11: 37-46 [*records of 35 species including several new for the country are presented*].

Kirwan, G. & Konrad, V. Little known West Palearctic birds: Mongolian Trumpeter Finch. *Birding World* 8 (4): 139-144 [*status and distribution in Turkey is discussed*].

Yemen

Al-Safadi, M. M. & Kasparek, M. Breeding observations on the birds of the Tihamah, Yemen. *Zool. in Middle East* 11: 15-20.

Around the Region

Compiled by
Pete Davidson and Guy M. Kirwan

Records in *Around the Region* are published for interest only, their inclusion does not imply acceptance by the records committee of the relevant country. Some records have been authenticated and these are indicated. In addition all records listed from Cyprus, Oman and UAE have been accepted by their respective records' committee.
All dates refer to 1995 unless otherwise stated.

Records and photographs for *Sandgrouse* 18 (2) should be sent, by July 15, to Around the Region, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19, 2DL, U.K.

Oman's sixth **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* present from December 1994 was last seen on 4 March (cf. *Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 34: 37). Two sub-adult **Brown Boobies** *Sula leucogaster* at Sawadi Island, Oman were very unusual in this region of the country, whilst six **Masked Boobies** *S. dactylatra* 12 miles off Khor Fakkan, UAE on 1 December were the fourth country record. On Cyprus a **Pygmy Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* was at Asprokremnos Dam on 23-25 August, and then up to six were at Eureton Dam on 28-30 (there have just been five recent records from Cyprus). At Armash fishponds, Armenia there were 2000 Pygmy Cormorants on 25 July.

A **Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* at Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt on 24 December was unusually far north, whilst from the south of the country came a report of two **Black-headed Herons** *Ardea melanocephala*, accompanying a **Goliath Heron** *A. goliath* 8 km north of Aswan on 13 December. There are no previous records of the former in Egypt, although the species has been recorded in southern Arabia and an immature remained at Eilat, Israel from October-December 1987 (Shirihai 1995). Also in Egypt a juvenile **Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis* was with up to 2000 White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* at Sharm-el Sheikh sewage ponds from 13 August until 3 September at least (much further north than is usual for this species). There have been c. 12 records in Israel, the most recent in 1993 (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 31: 42). Between 10 August-30 November there were 21 **Abdim's Storks** *C. abdimii* in Oman, including 19 at Salalah, the first records for a number of years. An immature **Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita* seen on the north side of Uludag, western Turkey on 22 August was one of the most surprising records of the period. With the demise of the wild Turkish population in 1989 the origin of this bird and three observed flying north at Eilat, Israel this spring (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 35: 69) is open to speculation. Could this Turkish record have been a wandering individual from the feral population at Birecik, or was it a vagrant from (as widely postulated) an undiscovered breeding colony in Arabia? (see Schulz & Schulz 1992). Even prior to its extinction in the wild in Turkey there had been very few records away from

the Euphrates valley, giving credence to the latter theory. The two **African Spoonbills** *Platalea alba* at Khawr Rouri, Oman were still present on 30 November (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 33: 37). Nearby, at Salalah Khawrs, c. 250 **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus minor* were present from 1-30 November at least; the third record.

At Lake Sevan, Armenia c. 100 **Bewick's Swans** *Cygnus columbianus* were present from 15-17 November with 223 there in early December, the first record. Additionally the seventh record in Turkey was of one at Kizilirmak Delta on 26 December 1993, pre-dating that at Burdur Gölü in December 1994 (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 35: 74), which becomes the eighth. Other interesting wildfowl included three **Greylag Geese** *Anser anser* at Al Ansab lagoons, Oman on 16 November and five **White-fronted Geese** *A. albifrons* at two sites in Oman between between November 1994 and 9 February. Two **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* at Al Ansab lagoons on 24 August were the earliest ever arrivals in Oman, whilst one at Zabeel ponds, UAE was an unusual record in the Emirates between 28 October-25 November. The fourth **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* and sixth **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* in UAE were both at Khor Dubai from 21 November into 1996. In Jordan four **Gadwall** *Anas strepera* and a male **Pochard** *Aythya ferina* at Ghadir Burqu' on 31 December were both scarce records; the former being the first away from Azraq. A waterfowl count of the Turkish Black Sea coast, between Samsun and the Georgian border, in mid-February produced six **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* at Eynesil, with another two at Yesilirmak Delta on the late date of 9 May. Over 500 **White-headed Ducks** *Oxyura leucocephala* at Tishlouit Reservoir on 10 November with 60-80 on nearby Lake Kefar Barukh in December were significant numbers for northern Israel.

Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* has apparently been overlooked in the past: the second Israeli and fifth Middle Eastern record was reported at Lotan in the southern Arava Valley on 14 May (*Birding World* 9 (1): 23). A vagrant juvenile **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* was at Sharm-el Sheikh from 15 August to 24 October at least. Also in Egypt, a juvenile **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* in southern Sinai from 23 August-24 October was the first record in Egypt since 1954. The first breeding record of **Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* in Jordan for many years involved five pairs in Dana Nature Reserve, whilst three pairs each of **Short-toed Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* and **Bonelli's Eagle** *Hieraeetus fasciatus*, both rare breeding species in Jordan, were found at the same site, with one or two of the latter also at Mujib Nature Reserve in December and January 1996. Also in the latter country were unusually large numbers of **Hen Harriers** *Circus cyaneus* in winter 1995/96, including 3-4 at South Shuneh on 24 November. An adult **Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* was on the lower slopes of Jabal Sharda, near Al-Baha, Saudi Arabia on 9 March. In the same area there were two records of **Shikra** *Accipter badius*: at Wadi Marhaba on 6 April, and Raidah slopes the next day, where a breeding population was recently discovered (Clark & Parslow 1991). In Armenia a claimed Shikra (see *Birding World* 8 (9): 335), near Meghri on 24 September is apparently not substantiable, whilst **Levant Sparrowhawk** *A. brevipes* was proven to breed for the first time in Armenia this summer. Another new breeding species for this ornithologically little known country was **Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis*. There were two reports of **Verreaux's Eagle** *A. verreauxii* in early April from south-west Saudi: this species was only proven to breed there in 1989 (Eichacker 1990). The fifth to seventh **Lesser Spotted Eagles** *A. pomarina* in UAE were recorded between 10-23 November. This species appears to have been overlooked in the past. An immature Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* claimed at Al Wathba, UAE from 9-21 July (see *Birding World* 8 (8): 292) has since been reidentified (from photographs) as the first country record of **Amur Falcon** *F. amurensis* by Dick Forsman (C. Richardson *in litt.*). An immature male of the latter species was near Taqah, Oman on 30 November. In the same country, a **Merlin** *F. columbarius* near Mughsayl on 19 January was the second record.

Seven **Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris* were at Wadi Juba, Saudi Arabia on 22 September. In Turkey a total of 37 **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* was noted at six localities between 15-27 September, including 20 together with a **Baillon's Crake** *P. pusilla* at Balikdami on 18 September. The third **Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio porphyrio* in UAE at Ruwais on 2 September (where next day the tenth **Little Crake** *P. parva* in the Emirates was found - with another there on 25 October), was closely followed by others at Zabeel ponds on 23 October-16 December and Ramtha tip from 10 November-27 December. A Purple Gallinule, of the race *madagascarensis*, was found dead at Zaranik on 23 September: the first record for northern Sinai. Two at Qurm Park, Oman from 29 October-1 November were the fourth country record. Finally, three or four Purple Gallinules were apparently shot in Kizilirmak Delta in September 1994. Although it has not been possible to confirm the identification by reference to the specimens, the hunters have provided a good description of the birds. This would be the nost northerly record ever in Turkey, although there is a late nineteenth century record from the environs of Istanbul (Kumerloeve 1961). A **White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus* at Jebel Ali, UAE on 8 December was the fourth record, the most recent was in January 1995 (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 34: 41). On Cyprus a roost totalling 345 **Demoiselle Cranes** *Anthropoides virgo* was at Akrotiri on 5 September, whilst 550 passed over Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in an hour on 22 March, but both totals were eclipsed by 1000 which passed through Lake Ghilli, Armenia between 2-9 September. There were 17 **Little Bustards** *Tetrax tetrax* in the Bet Shean valley northern Israel in December. In neighbouring Jordan **Houbara Bustard** *Chlamydotis undulata* tracks were regularly found in Wadi Araba during July and August.

An adult female **Painted Snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* at Al Ansab lagoons on 24 August-2 September was the fifth record in Oman, whilst the first breeding record in Israel involved a pair with four young photographed near Hadera on 25 October (see *Dutch Birding* 17 (6): 259-263). On Cyprus **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* bred for the first time in several years, with three pairs ar Zakaki Marsh. Four **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* and a **Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* were at the Kizilirmak Delta, Turkey on 25 September: both were the first autumn records from this comparatively well watched locality (see Dijksen & Kasparek 1985). In Saudi Arabia two Dotterel 85 km

south-east of Rafhah between 2-4 March were the first record from the Northern Frontier Province. The 17-18th records in UAE occurred in November 1995. A first winter Black-winged Pratincole at Duaka, Oman on 16 November 1994 has been accepted as the seventh country record. Two **Little Pratincoles** *G. lactea* strayed to eastern Arabia last autumn: singles at Fahud, Oman on 30 October and Khor Kalba, UAE on 2 December (seventh record). The second **Kittlitz's Plover** *C. pecuarius* for UAE was at Abu Dhabi racecourse on 23-25 September, closely following the first in September 1994 (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 34: 41), whilst there were five **Caspian Plovers** *C. asiaticus* at various localities between 1-13 September, three at Al Habab on 29 September and one at Al Wathba in early November. The third Kittlitz's Plover on Cyprus was at Kouklia Reservoir on 10-12 March *(COS (1957) Feb. 1996 Newsletter Supplement)*; previous records were in 1991 and 1993. An adult summer **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* at Zakaki Marsh in mid-August would be the first for Cyprus, if accepted (thus far details have not been submitted to the COS (1957) Records Committee, Peter Stewart *pers. comm.*). There is only one record from Turkey, in August 1988 (Kirwan & Martins 1994). The first **Spur-winged Plover** *Hoplopterus spinosus* in Armenia was at Massis fishponds on 8 November. A summer plumaged **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* at Khor Dubai on 1-2 July was the second record for the Emirates; the first was in 1994 (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 34: 41). Several **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* were in Turkey, including two at Karamik Marshes on 16 September, one at Çavuscu Gölü next day, and five in Kizilirmak Delta on 26 September, but were overshadowed by 419 at Khor Dubai on 8 August. A **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* was at Dhayah mangroves, UAE on 10 November. A **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicaria* at Zaranik, northern Sinai on 20 September, was about the seventh record for Egypt, where there were also up to 25 **Red-necked Phalarope** *P. lobatus* at the same time (the highest ever numbers in Egypt). In Turkey there was one of the latter at Ulubat Gölü on 15 September with five in Kizilirmak Delta on 26 September.

In Turkey an immature **Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichythaetus* flew past the Bosphorus on 25 September. Up to five **Audouin's Gulls** *L. audouinii* were at Zaranik (northern Sinai) from 8 September to 7 October suggesting that this species is more common in Egypt than previously supposed. Further south a **Saunders' Tern** *Sterna saundersi* on Tawila Island in the Red Sea on 30 August was only the second confirmed Egyptian record; the first was in 1982.

A **Spotted Sandgrouse** *Pterocles senegallus* nest with five eggs found in Wadi Araba, Jordan on 21 July constituted a new breeding record for the country. Two **Hume's Tawny Owls** *Strix butleri* were heard calling in Wadi Shuwaymiyah on 16 January, the fifth record in Oman, whilst a **Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus* at Thumrait, Oman on 1-2 April was the fourth record. At least 180 **Stock Doves** *Columba oenas* between Safawi and Ruwayshid, Jordan on 31 December was a significant count. In southern Egypt further sightings of **African Collared Dove** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* involved four near Abu Simbel temple in late September, whilst further north the second **Rufous Turtle Dove** *S. orientalis* in Egypt was three miles north of Naama Bay, Sinai on 18 November. The first was at Abu Simbel in October 1990 (Madge 1992). The record of one at Eilat, Israel in April 1995 (see *Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 35: 69) has recently been questioned (see *Birding World* 9 (1): 27). A male **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* found on Das Island, on 15 November was the 11th UAE record. A **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* at Sharm-el Sheikh on 21 October was about the eighth record for Egypt, whilst singles at Sun Farms, Sohar on 8 November 1994 and Khawr Sawli on 14 November 1994 have now been accepted as the ninth and tenth records in Oman. In addition to the report recently listed (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 35: 67) three further sightings of Little Swift on Cyprus during the period 9-22 April brought the total number of accepted records for the island to five. Two **Jacobin Cuckoo** *Clamator jacobinus* at Malaki Dam on 22 September were a rarity in Saudi Arabia, as was one at Khawr Razat, Oman on 24 August. At Salalah, Oman there was a **Koel** *Eudynamys scolopacea* on 17 March. The Jahra Gardens, Kuwait hosted an **Indian Roller** *Coracias benghalensis* on 1 December. Egypt's fourth **Abyssinian Roller** *C. abyssinica* was at Abu Simbel on 29 September (Pfützke & Halley 1995). In addition at least ten were at Malaki Dam between 21-23 September, where there were also over 20 **Grey-headed Kingfisher** *Halcyon leucocephala* during the same period. The first **White-breasted Kingfisher** *H. smyrnensis* in the Riyadh area, Saudi Arabia was present between 24 August-28 September at least. In south-west Saudi a single **African Grey Hornbill** *Tockus nasutus* below Al Hada, near Taif on 6 October was unusually far north.

A **Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* was near Marmul, Oman on 30 November. In Israel the country's third **Brown-throated Sand Martin** *Riparia paludicola* was claimed in the Bet Shean valley on 20 December. Three **Singing Bush Larks** *Mirafra cantillans* were at Malaki Dam on 21 September: this species remains extremely rare in Saudi Arabia. The recent publication of the *Birds of Israel* (Shirihai 1995) has highlighted a number of records listed in the popular literature which are not considered acceptable. These include a **Black Lark** *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* reported at Eilat on 29 October 1993, which despite being photographed has been rejected. At Al Wathba, UAE there were ten **Bimaculated Larks** *M. bimaculata* from 2 November, increasing to 29 by the month's end, with up to eight at nearby Al Ain camel track from mid-November until the year end. Also at Al Wathba were up to two **Small Skylarks** *Alauda gulgula* into late December, whilst in Israel there were 13 in the Bet Shean valley, three at Yotvata and two at Nizzana in November-December. In addition the third and fourth Egyptian records were at Sharm-el Sheikh Farm, southern Sinai on 13-14 October and 21-22 October, together with up to **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (the highest count ever in Egypt). Nine of the latter were still present on 16 November. In Jordan **Tawny Pipit** *A. campestris* probably bred for the first time, in the highlands near Qadisiyya, where territorial birds were observed from late March to mid-May. Single **Blyth's Pipits** *A. godlewskii* were at Abu Dhabi racecourse on 10 October-4 November and 20 December, whilst four were at Al Wathba on 2 November, constituting the 12-14th records in UAE: the first was as recently as 1993 (James 1994). The UAE also claimed its 15th

Olive-backed Pipit *A. hodgsoni* at Bateen airport park on 2 November. A **Buff-bellied Pipit** *A. rubescens* overwintered in Bet Shean valley, northern Israel between December 1994 and February with further reports of four or five *japonicus* race birds in the same area in December. The species now regularly overwinters, in varying numbers, in the Eilat area. There was also a probable at Sharm-el-Sheikh, Sinai on 24 December. In Saudi Arabia an unprecedented passage of **Citrine Wagtails** *Motacilla citreola* was recorded, with at least 20 in the Riyadh area from mid-September to late October. In Egypt two **African Pied Wagtails** *M. aguimp* were at the now regular locality of Abu Simbel on 18 November. The UAE hosted its seventh (and only the eighth Arabian) **Forest Wagtail** *Dendronanthus indicus* at Bateen Gardens, Abu Dhabi on 16-23 October. All have been since 1987 with the two most recent in 1994 (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 34: 32).

UAE hosted two flocks of **Grey Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus*: seven at Al Wathba from 2-15 November and 20 at Sila on 10 November, whilst 62 were at Riyadh on 24 November, but a male at Abu Simbel, Egypt on 16 November, which was incredibly joined by a female or immature on 8 December were only the second country record (the other being in 1938). There is one other record from Africa: on the Eritrean Red Sea coast in 1850 (Urban & Brown 1971). Mist-netting at Jahra Pool, Kuwait produced the first record in Arabia of **Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* on 23 November, closely followed by Arabia's second **Black-throated Accentor** *Prunella atrogularis* five days later: the first was a specimen taken in Oman (Alström 1991). Other exciting finds there included the second and third national records of **Dunnock** *P. modularis* in the same period (see *Birding World* 8 (12): 451). A **Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia calliope* previously reported at Eilat on 25 April 1994 (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 33: 36) has been rejected by the Israeli Rarities Committee (RDCNI) (Shirihai 1995). In Israel the first breeding **Rock Thrushes** *Monticola saxatilis* away from Hermon were a pair with nestlings at Biq'at Qadesh, Galilee on 23-24 April (*Brit. Birds* 89 (1): 39). Two **Blackbirds** *Turdus merula* were the 12-13th records in UAE: on Das Island on 14-16 November and at Jebel Ali on 8 December. A male **Black-throated Thrush** *T. ruficollis* was at the Emirates golf course on 10 November, whilst in Oman there were two at Dauka on 29 January and three at Hilf in the same month. This species appears to be increasingly regular in eastern Arabia. The first Armenian record since 1953 was a male at Yeghegnaozor on 15 October. It was followed by five at Mormazar on 16 November and two near Uedii on 25 November (see *Birdwatch* 43: 61). Surprisingly there are no records from adjacent Turkey. In Jordan there was a **Mistle Thrush** *T. viscivorus* at Jabal Sarab on 6 December and eight more at Alqadissiah on 8 December; the species is a scarce winter visitor. **Stonechats** *Saxicola torquata* of one of the eastern races, either *maura* or *stejnegeri*, were reported at Sharm-el Sheikh, Sinai on 25-27 November (*Birding World* 8 (11): 418), near South Shuneh, Jordan on 24 November and the first record in Armenia of one of these eastern races, was at Massis fishponds on 29 September. Another first for Armenia was a **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* at Horom on 30 October. There is one record from adjacent Turkey. An adult female **Pied Wheatear** *O. pleschanka* at Kourion beach, Cyprus on 19 April 1992 has recently been accepted as the first island record (J. Sadler *in litt.*). Two **Cyprus Pied Wheatears** *O. cypriaca* at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on 21 September constituted a new species for the area.

A **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* at Akamas Peninsula on 30 April has been accepted as the eighth record in Cyprus. Three **Paddyfield Warblers** *Acrocephalus agricola* at Armash, Armenia were considered to be possibly breeding: the species now appears well established in adjacent areas of eastern Turkey. A **Moustached Warbler** *A. melanopogon* at Ain al Faiydah, UAE from 17 November until the year end was the sixth country record. The first confirmed breeding of **Great Reed Warbler** *A. arundinaceus* in Arabia occurred at Sabkhat al Fasl, Saudi Arabia in May when two fledglings were found (*The Phoenix* 12: 19). The first **Basra Reed Warbler** *A. griseldis* on Cyprus, in June 1981, has recently been accepted, whilst a female trapped in Kuwait in April/May had a brood patch and egg in the oviduct. The first breeding in Kuwait seems probable. Two **Booted Warblers** *Hippolais caligata*, of the race *rama* which is occasionally considered a separate species Sykes's Warbler, were at Khor Kalba, UAE on 15 November. An **Olive-tree Warbler** *H. olivetorum* at Feinan ruins, Wadi Araba on 20 August was rare in Jordan. The fifth **Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana* on Cyprus was at Akamas Peninsula on 24 March. Four **Yemen Warblers** *Parisoma buryi* at Raidah, Saudi Arabia on 7 April were noteworthy. Several claims of **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* in Israel have been reidentified (Shirihai 1995): at Yeroham Reservoir on 11 April 1982 (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 9: 8) - a Willow Warbler *P. trochilus*; at Jerusalem in April 1983 - a Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler *P. i. humei* and in northwestern Galilee on 21 April 1991 (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 27: 45) - a Chiffchaff *P. collybita*. The second **Raddes Warbler** *P. schwarzi* in UAE and Arabia was at Bateen Gardens, Abu Dhabi on 17 October. The first was in Dubai on 19 October 1992 (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 30: 47).

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* bred at Suwaylih, Amman, where young were recorded in mid-August: there are very few breeding records in Jordan. Although now well established in neighbouring Jordan (see Andrews 1991), a **Blue Tit** *Parus caeruleus* at Majdal Shams, Mount Hermon on 21 August has been accepted as the first record in Israel (*Brit. Birds* 89 (1): 42). Two **Penduline Tits** *Remiz pendulinus* at Sharm-el Sheikh on 16 November were the earliest ever in Egypt of this scarce and erratic winter visitor. An **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* at Paphos Lighthouse on 6 May has been accepted as the third record on Cyprus; presumably it was the same as that previously mentioned in these reports (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 35: 67). **Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* rarely features in these reports; one or two remained in the Jubail area, Saudi Arabia from April until 25 May, but without evidence of breeding. There are very few breeding records from the Arabian Peninsula (Jennings 1995). In Egypt a juvenile **Rose-coloured Starling** *S. roseus* at Sharm-el Sheikh on 15 and 23 August was a rare find. A juvenile **Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cineracea* was at Salalah, Oman on 5 August, whilst **Common Mynah** *Acridotheres tristis* continued its north-westwards

expansion from Muscat, with records from Barka, Sawadi and Sohar between September and November. Six **Jackdaws** *Corvus monedula* were at Pella, Jordan on 24 November where the species is a rarity whilst a pair of **Ravens** *C. corvus* at Shaubak in early December until at least mid-February 1996 was the first record since the 1960s.

The overwintering flock of 16 **Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs* in Jubail, Saudi Arabia was last seen on 16 March, whilst the first **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* for Arabia also in Jubail, last reported on 8 February (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 35: 73) remained into March. Single **Bramblings** *F. montifringilla* were at Hamraniyah on 16-17 November and Al Wathba on 1 December; the 16-17th records in UAE, whilst another at Sharm-el Sheikh, Egypt on 27 November was also noteworthy. A **Yemen Linnet** *Carduelis yemenensis* reported at Wadi Hinna, Oman on 16 September (*Birding World* 8 (8): 335) was not accepted by the Oman Bird Records Committee. One or two **Syrian Serins** *Serinus syriacus* were at Mujib Nature Reserve, west of Faqu', Jordan between 29 November and 22 December; the species is rare in winter here. The first autumn record of **Pale Rock Sparrow** *Petronia brachydactyla* in Jordan involved two north of Ras an Naqab on 2 July. They were overshadowed by over 400 near Sohar, Oman on 30-31 March. Two birds, thought to be **Mongolian Trumpeter Finches** *Bucanetes mongolicus* were seen east of Layla, on the northern edge of the Empty Quarter of Saudi Arabia on 26 March but could not be confirmed (*The Phoenix* 12: 17). There is a previous record from the Arabian Peninsula; in Bahrain in winter 1970-71 (Nightingale & Hill 1993). At least 30 **Arabian Waxbills** *Estralida rufibarba* were at Wadi Thee Gazal, Taif, Saudi Arabia on 23 June, with at least ten, including some juveniles, in the same place on 7 July. Also in south-west Saudi there were three **Golden-winged Grosbeaks** *Rhynchostruthus socotranus* just north of Bani Yazid on 16 March, and four, including some singing, in Wadi Marhaba on 5 April. The status of both these species in this part of their range requires clarification. A **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* was on Das Island, UAE on 21 November; the ninth record. There were two in the same place last autumn (*Orn. Soc. Middle East Bull.* 34: 44). The first **Yellowhammer** *E. citrinella* for the Bahrain archipelago was reported on 18 November (see *Dutch Birding* 17 (6): 262). **Pine Buntings** *E. leucocephalos* are now a regular winter visitor in very small numbers in north and central Israel, so three (including a male) c. 15 km north of Petra, Jordan on 14 December, although the first national record were not unexpected. At Shayitt Agricultural Complex, 100 km west of Nuayriyah, Saudi Arabia two **Corn Buntings** *Milaria calandra* were singing on 5 March: only two to three breeding records in Arabia have been documented, one or two in UAE and one in eastern Saudi (Jennings 1995).

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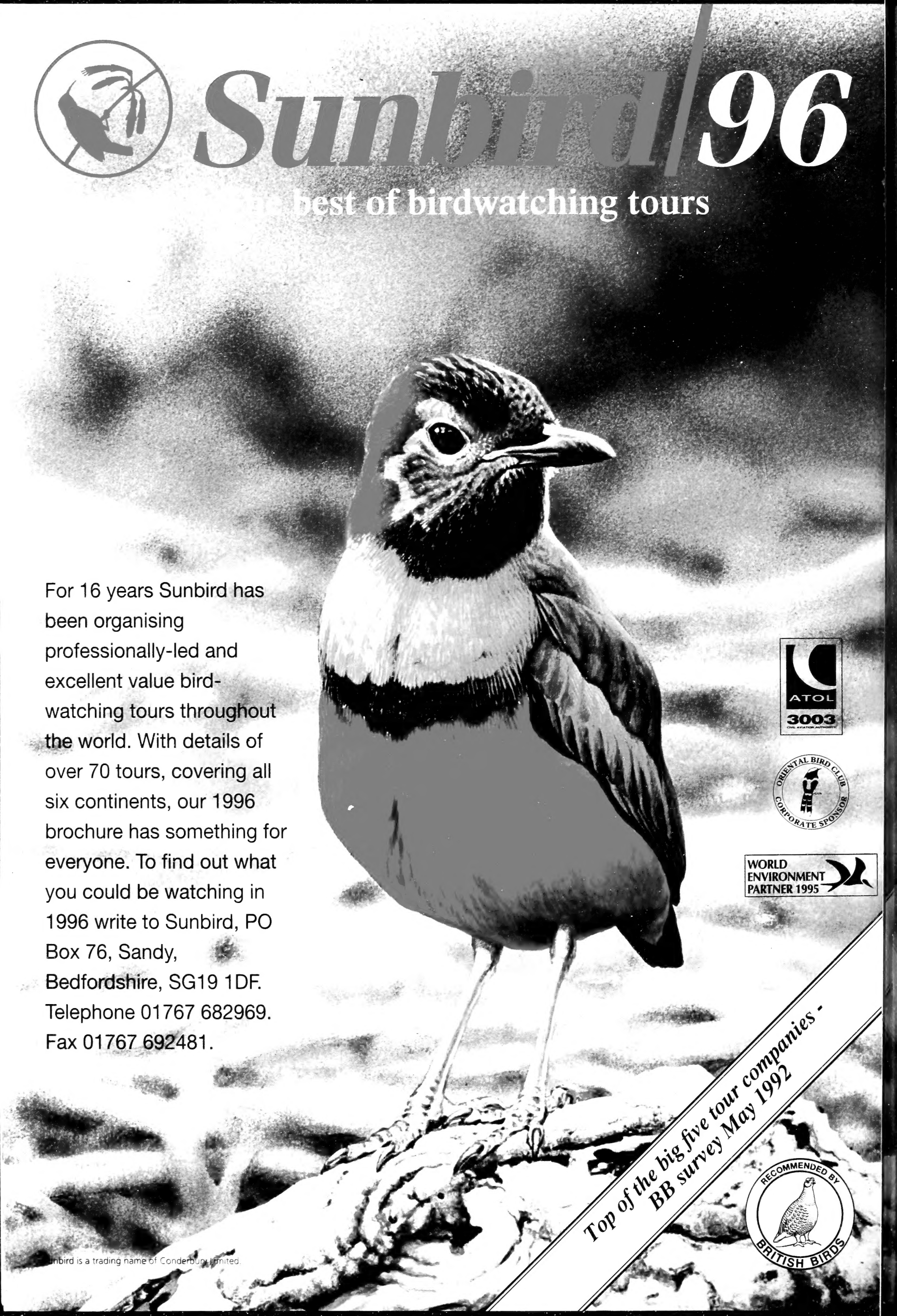

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